“CONVENIENT FOR SHAIKHS?” ASSESSING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BEDOUIN ELITES AND BRITISH OFFICERS IN NORTHERN IRAQ DURING THE MANDATE PERIOD (1921-1932)

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Abstract

This thesis explores state-tribal relations in northern Iraq during the mandate period (1921-1932). More specifically, it analyzes the interactions between British officers and the shaikhs or elites of the Shammar Jarba, the largest Bedouin tribal confederation in the region, by primarily examining the periodical intelligence reports and correspondences written by the mandate officials. In doing so, the thesis contends that Bedouin elites in northern Iraq were able to maintain and expand their authority during the mandate period due to the territorial and border disputes between British Iraq and the neighboring states in the region. On the one hand, the thesis shows that British officials relied on the Bedouin elites' access to transnational networks to gain the upper hand over French Syria and Turkey. On the other hand, it also explains how British officers were forced to accommodate the shaikhs' authority as they learnt that any misguided or heavy-handed state intervention in the Shammar's affairs would be exploited by neighboring states in their efforts to win the tribesmen to their side. As for Bedouin elites, they were no strangers to negotiating authority with state officials as the late Ottoman period witnessed a considerable level of compromise and shared interests between them and provincial bureaucrats. Because of that, this thesis contends that the Shammar shaikhs were able to expand their authority by taking advantage of the nascent states' competition over their allegiance and services.

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Introduction

"Shammar [are] across Turkey, Syria & Iraq. Convenient for shaikhs & bandits. But awkward for grazing."[1]

John Glubb, British Captain of Ramadi, Iraq

Glubb made his assessment after attending a conference co-organized by French officers in Syria and British officers in Iraq to settle several disputes between *Bedouin* tribes spanning both countries.[2] After the conference failed due to intense disagreements between French and British officers, Glubb bemoaned its "ill-fated" proceedings, as he remarked that the "sight of the representatives of two great powers wrangling and intriguing against one another was not wasted on the tribesmen," who were also attending the conference.[3] Among the attendees was 'Ajil al-Yawar, a Shammar shaikh, whose own struggle with his cousin Daham al-Hadi would embroil French and British officers throughout the period of the British mandate over Iraq (1921-1933).

During the mandate period, disputes involving the three states mentioned by Glubb meant that the Shammar Shaykhs, with their transnational networks and ability to move relatively easily across unfixed borders, were valuable allies for British, French, and Turkish officers alike. In their attempts to undermine the authority of British officers in northern Iraq, both Turkish and French officers strived to win over the shaikhs and were ready to take advantage of any tensions between the shaikhs and the Iraqi state for that cause. Tribal shaikhs, on the other hand, were very much aware of the rise in value of their ability to

[1] Oxford Middle East Center (MEC), John Glubb, Report on Ramadi, May 5 1923.
[2] John Glubb served in 1920s as a Special Service Officer in British intelligence in the province of Ramadi. In 1930, he was transferred to Transjordan where he eventually became commander of the country's regular army. See Robert Fletcher, "Introduction," in *British Imperialism and 'The Tribal Question' Desert Administration and Nomadic Societies in the Middle East, 1919-1936* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 12.
[3] MEC, John Glubb, Al Qaim Conference, May 7 1923.

exercise influence among nomads in multiple states and access intelligence and information beyond borders. Both ‘Ajil and Daham – at different stages throughout the mandate period – gained valuable concessions from the Iraqi state that enabled them to maintain their authority and enrich themselves. Whereas tribal shaikhs used their state-enabled authority in their own feuds, the Iraq state under the guidance of British officers had to cautiously weigh their interventions in tribal affairs and attempts to enforce control over the tribesmen who moved to neighboring, rival countries when faced with state expansion.

In my thesis, I argue that the Shammar shaykhs in northern Iraq represented indispensable mediators for British officers ruling over Iraq during the mandate period, especially given the territorial and border disputes with Turkey and French Syria. Competition with those two states defined the relationship between Shammar Shaykhs and British officers. I will support my argument by looking at two events which constitute the main focus of my thesis. The first event (chapter II) revolves around the selection of the paramount shaykh of the Shammar where British officers unintentionally caused a decade-long feud between ‘Ajil and Daham because of their priority on access to vital intelligence in their struggle against Turkey and their attempts to contain King Faisal I’s independent drive for authority over tribal elites. The second event (chapter III) revolves around British officers’ efforts at collecting taxes from the Shammar tribesmen and how their attempts at directly enforcing taxes by sideling ‘Ajil and coordinating with French officers in Syria failed primarily because of the latter’s use of tax collection to expand the authority of their allied shaikh Daham over the Shammar in Iraq. Whereas the mandate period witnessed considerable negotiation and shared interests between shaikhs and state authorities, I show that this was not original to the mandate years as the dynamics that shaped the relationship between the Shammar’s elites and the state had their origin in the late Ottoman period (Chapter I). Before

moving on to analyze the relationship between the Shammar elites and the British officers in northern Iraq, I will first review the historiography on the British mandate in (northern) Iraq, introduce by methodology and primary sources, and define key concepts which are critical to my overall argument.

Historiographic Review

Literature on the history of northern Iraq during the mandate period can be divided into three categories according to the approaches that they adopt: state-centric, identity-focused, and (transnational) mobility-centered. Whereas the latter two categories are based on analysis of either the local or regional scales, the state-centric approach focuses more on the national scale and bounds the histories of the different regions of Iraq into one narrative.

The state-centric trend in approaching the history of Iraq is the oldest among the three categories. It looks at the history of Iraq from "above" and from the center rather than the periphery. In his account on how British officers approached state-building in Iraq, Peter Sluglett argues that Britain regularly resorted to military power to prop up the power of its allies among the Sunni urban elites and crush dissidence among the rural Kurdish and Shia communities.[4] According to Sluglett, British officers' oppressive and authoritarian methods went against their official claims on that their aim in Iraq was to build a constitutional state that guarantees political freedom. He also highlights that Britain's primary motivation behind attaching the province to Iraq and pushing back against Turkey's claims is its desire to control Mosul's oil.[5] On the other hand, Charles Tripp contends that social stability was the primary concern of the British during the mandate period who saw ex-Ottoman officers (mostly Sunni Arab) as the adequate group to help them attain that goal. The claims of other

[4] Peter Sluglett, "Oil, Boundaries and Insolvency: Political and Economic Problems, 1924–1926" in *Britain in Iraq: Contriving King and Country*, *1914-1932* (London and New York: IB Tauris, 2007), 65 – 93.
[5] Ibid.

groups – such as the Kurdish or the Assyrian ones in the north of Iraq – were not seriously entertained or even shut down by the British officers in Iraq.[6] Meanwhile, Samira Haj illustrates how the British mandate and the Iraqi monarchy's land reforms enabled the formation of a tribal oligarchy and a non-capitalist form of agriculture which in turn contributed to the bloody military coup d'état of 1958.[7] Haj's account focuses more on the South of Iraq and generalizes the dynamics of that region to the rest of the country.

Contrary to the state-centric approach, the identity-focused trend looks at social and political dynamics of the periphery rather than the center. The main focus of this trend is on questions related to identity formation and ethno-religious relations. In her history of the Yazidi community in Northern Iraq, Nelida Fuccaro explains how the community's members appropriated the "minority" definition of the League of Nations in their own self-identification, and describes how the state's attempts at territorial consolidation exacerbated ruptures within the community including divisions concerning sacred rituals.[8] Relatedly, Sarah Shields details the challenges that the League of Nations faced when they sent out a commission to classify residents of Northern Iraq as "Turk" or "Arab" in deciding whether the area should be attached to the Republic of Turkey or the Kingdom of Iraq; eventually, the commission failed to make its decision based on people's ethnic belonging as other factors such as economic relations and political affiliations were more important in defining their multi-layered identity.[9] Moreover, Arbella Bet-Shlimon's account on the history of Kirkuk argues that ethnic divisions between the city's Kurdish, Turcoman and Arab

[6] Charles Tripp, "The British Mandate," in *A History of Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
[7] Samira Haj, "Land, Power and Commercialization" in *the making of Iraq, 1900-1963: capital, power, and ideology* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997), 32.
[8] Nelida Fuccaro, "Tribes, Borders and Nation-Building" in *The Other Kurds: Yazidis in Colonial Iraq* (London and New York: IB Tauris, 1999), 118.
[9] Sarah Shields, "Mosul, the Ottoman legacy and the League of Nations," *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies* 3, no. 2 (2009), 226.

communities were not age-old but rather the result of competition over state resources in the aftermath of the drilling of oil around the city starting in the 1920s.[10] On the other hand, Orit Bashkin pushes back against claims that nationalism and ethnic divisions were significant factors during the mandate period and argues that the case of northern Iraq's Jews shows that "regionalism, transregional networks and multilingualism" continued to define the lives and identities of communities during that period.[11]

The recent trend that concentrates on transnational mobility addresses two major shortcomings connected to the aforementioned categories.[12] First, by focusing on actors from the periphery, this trend avoids overly alleviating the role of the state and highlights the role of non-state actors in shaping the history of northern Iraq. Additionally, it also addresses an important aspect which is neglected by the identity-focused trend: mainly how individuals and communities in the periphery interacted with, resisted or appropriated state institutions, including borders. For instance, recent literature on tribes in inter-war Iraq steers away from the focus on modernization and centralization to cross-border mobility and border-making. By focusing on the intra-tribal disputes of the 'Anazah tribe, Laura

[10] Arbella Bet-Shlimon, "The British Mandate," in *City of Black Gold: Oil, Ethnicity and the Making of Modern Kirkuk* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019), 57.

[11] Orit Bashkin, "Jews in an Imperial Pocket: Northern Iraqi Jews and the British Mandate," in *The Routledge Handbook of the History of the Middle East Mandates* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 372.

[12] The works of Mélisande Genat, Carl Shook, and Talha Çiçek can also be counted among the mobility-centered trend. Genat, who is currently a doctoral student at Stanford University's History Department, works on tribal justice and argues that the Iraqi state (under British tutelage) showed a high degree of cooperation and adaptability in its approach with tribal subjects in northern Iraq. Her research is based on the proceedings of tribal trials at the courts operating under the Tribal Criminal and Civil Disputes Regulation (TCCDR), which was introduced by British officers in Iraq in 1916. On the other hand, Carl Shook's research shows how tribal Shaikhs played an important role in the eventual demarcation of Iraq's boundaries with Syria and Saudi Arabia. As for Çiçek, his most recent work argues that the "stubborn mobility" of nomads in Syria, Iraq, Jordan and Saudi Arabia in the first half of the twentieth century enabled them to protect their autonomy and preserve their control over the desert space that spanned those countries. See Carl Shook, "The Origins and Development of Iraq's National Boundaries, 1918-1932: Policing and Political Geography in the Iraq-Nejd and Iraq-Syria Borderlands," (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2018); Mélisande Genat, "Tribal Justice and State Law in Iraq," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 53, no. 3 (2021): 507-511; "The Stubborn Mobility: Nomads and Political Agency in the Arab East, 1920-2015," Talha Çiçek – Environment and Justice, accessed June 12, 2022, https://www.zmo.de/forschung/hauptforschungsprogramm/umwelt-und-gerechtigkeit/the-stubborn-mobility

Stocker explores how nomads were able to play an important role in negotiating the "political order of the post-Ottoman Middle East" as different governments were invested in securing the allegiances of powerful tribes. More particularly, nomads' cross-border mobility gave them leverage over states who were forced to include tribal elites in the state-making process.[13] Samuel Dolbee also contends that cross-border mobility was common in the inter-war period and reveals how nomads used the ambiguity of where exactly the borders were located to their own advantage.[14] These narratives compliment other works on the history of British interaction with tribes during the interwar period which posit that British officers were interested in allowing and managing the cross-border mobility of tribes who were a major source of intelligence.[15]

The mobility-centered trend counters earlier accounts on tribes in northern Iraq in the interwar years that plot a linear path of increased state control over tribes during the modern period. In his narrative history account of the Shammar Jarba tribe between 1800 and 1958, John Frederick Williamson explains how the introduction of political borders restricted the movement of the Shammar Jarba and laid the way for further administrative centralization. He argues that the superior military technology of the British mandate allowed the state to exert control over tribal politics and effectively regulate *khuwwa* (tributary payment) collection and intra-tribal raiding. He also maintains that the interwar period witnessed a significant change in tribal leadership where the change in political structures meant that the traditional tribal leadership values of "bravery, eloquence,

[13] Laura Stocker, "THE 'CAMEL DISPUTE': CROSS-BORDER MOBILITY AND TRIBAL CONFLICTS IN THE IRAQI–SYRIAN BORDERLAND, 1929–34," in *Regimes of Mobility: Borders and State Formation in the Middle East, 1918-1946*, ed. Jordi Tejel and Ramazan Hakkı Öztan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022), 322.
[14] Samuel Dolbee, "The Locust and the Starling: People, Insects, and Disease in the Late Ottoman Jazira and After, 1860-1940" (PhD diss., New York University, 2017), 354.
[15] Robert SG Fletcher, "Running the corridor: nomadic societies and imperial rule in the inter-war Syrian desert," *Past & Present* 220, no. 1 (2013), 200.

wisdom and generosity" became less relevant compared to political acumen and shrewd business skills.[16]

Methodology and Sources

My approach in this thesis is inspired by the frameworks of the *Histoire Croisée* and microhistory. To better understand how tribal elites dealt with the state, it is important to account for how they simultaneously operated at the intersection of multiple local, regional and national scales.[17] It is also essential to highlight the agency of tribal elites; whereas it is important to consider how structural changes shaped their roles and behaviors, it is also as equally important to look into how they accelerated, resisted, or modified developments in the larger social and political structures which they were part of.[18] Emphasizing agency means that the behavior and perspectives of tribal elites cannot be accurately analyzed by rational models that are based on assumptions which do not apply in all contexts.[19] Additionally, it would be difficult to understand tribal elites' position during the mandate period without emphasizing the connectedness which bound them to actors and events beyond Mosul, both in Iraq and beyond the border in Syria and Turkey.[20] Accordingly, cross-border interactions and transnational influences should be carefully taken into account when assessing the configurations which tribal elites were part of.[21] Moreover, a thorough understanding of the interactions between the state and Bedouin elites during the mandate

[16] John Frederick Williamson, "A political history of the Shammar Jarba tribe of al-Jazirah: 1800-1958" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1975), 178
[17] Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, "Beyond Comparison: Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity 1," *History and theory* 45, no. 1 (2006), 44.
[18] Ibid., 48.
[19] Giovanni Levi, "On Microhistory," in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Polity Press, 2001), 104.
[20] Werner and Zimmermann, "Beyond Comparison," 31.
[21] Ibid., 38.

period cannot be achieved without approaching the context within which those actors operate as one that is multilayered, jumbled, heterogenous, open, and fluid.[22]

By emphasizing entanglements, agency and the fluidity of the historical context of northern Iraq, my approach in this thesis is careful to avoid dichotomies such as those between "powerful, active colonizers and passive peoples."[23] This is not to say that the British officers over Iraq did not resort to brute force to quell opposition to their rule or to deny that they viewed tribesmen as "noble savages" who needed be civilized. However, and more often than not, critical studies on colonial rule put too much emphasis on the discourses of those in power, which – rather paradoxically – overstate the actual authority of rulers and undermine the agency of actors from below.[24] Far from being a monolithic, all-powerful machine, the Iraqi state under the tutelage of the British empire was an "understaffed [and] misinformed" entity whose "sovereign power always remained patchy and dependent as much upon complex forms of accommodation as upon the application of brute force or the deployment of discourses of racial exclusion."[25] Because of that, a proper understanding of power relations in northern Iraq requires a departure from the colonizer-colonized dichotomy and appreciation of the entanglement of scales and the importance of agency, specifically of that of actors from below.

In this thesis, I have relied on intelligence reports produced by British officers and their correspondences between themselves and with other actors such as tribal shaikhs and French officers in Syria. With respect to intelligence reports, they were produced either

[22] Levi, "On Microhistory," 107.
[23] Edmund Burke III and David Prochaska, "Orientalism: From Postcolonial Theory to World History," in *Genealogies of Orientalism: History, Theory, Politics*, eds. Edmund Burke III and David Prochaska (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 3.
[24] Ibid, 10; 28.
[25] Cyrus Schayegh and Andrew Arsan, "Introduction," in *The Routledge handbook of the history of the Middle East Mandates*, eds. Cyrus Schayegh and Andrew Arsan (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 13.

through informants among the tribes of the northern Jazira (the parts of the Jazira in northern Iraq), informal meetings with tribesmen, or through direct reporting by tribal elites. The Special Service Officer (SSO) in Mosul was the primary official who relayed intelligence to the high commissioner and his political secretary in the form of weekly detailed reports on the political and military situation in the northern province. The political secretary summarized these weekly, detailed reports and the letters authored or received by British officers to come up with fortnightly reports which were produced every two weeks. These biweekly intelligence reports provided a detailed description of political activities in Iraq down to the district level, reflections on public opinion, and a summary of major events taking place at the state's frontiers. In my thesis, I will rely on the political secretary's intelligence reports – which were published as part of an edited collection titled *Political Diaries of the Arab World: Iraq* in 1998 by Cambridge Archive Editions – and the detailed intelligence reports produced by the SSO in Mosul.[26] In addition to the above, I have also relied on other annual reports produced by political officers other than the SSO and the diaries and letters of Gertrude Bell, a British traveler who later on in her career became the close adviser of Faisal I, first King of Iraq.

Given that most of the sources used in this thesis are not authored by tribal elites but rather by British officers and, to a much lesser extent, Iraqi officials, I have cautiously and selectively relied on those sources to reconstruct events involving the Shammar Jarba's tribal elites. To begin with, intelligence officials themselves mentioned whether a piece of information was reliable or not based on their judgment. Additionally, I refrained from citing the judgement of British officials without clearly mentioning that the evaluation is theirs and

[26] The Iraq collection is part of a series of collections titled *Political Diaries* that covers other regions with significant British intelligence such as Kuwait, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and China.

attempting to analyze the reasoning behind their assessment. Moreover, the major events in this thesis are ones that were discussed relatively in detail and on multiple occasions by the British officials, which means that they are unlikely to have been based on false reports. Ultimately, however, the sources only focus on issues which were deemed important by the British high commissioner i.e. issues that pertain to the stability and order of the state. For instance, information on other aspects that shaped the lives of the Shammar's members– such as economic and ecological factors – is limited in these intelligence reports. Even though these factors were undoubtedly critical to the tribe's approach to the state, they will not be dwelled upon in my thesis. Instead, I will reflect on the Shammar's elites political and social motives behind their interactions with the state, which I believe can be interpreted from the details provided in the British officers' intelligence reports and letters.

Concepts and Definitions

In this thesis, I will investigate the relationship between the Shammar Bedouin and the Iraqi state under the British mandate. More specifically, my aim is to explore this relationship in a region which was open to influences emanating from beyond the nascent Iraqi state's borders. In order to better explore the state-tribal relationship in northern Iraq, it is important to clarify the definitions of the key concepts of borderlands, tribes, and mandate.

Borders, Borderlands, and Frontiers

Borders, boundaries, and frontiers are terms that are often used interchangeably even though they might have different conceptual implications. A boundary often refers to the physical location of a border or the separating line between different communities.[27] A

[27] Baud Michiel, and Willem Van Schendel, "Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands." *Journal of World History* 8, no. 2 (1997), 213.

border, on the other hand, usually refers to the crystallization of a boundary into an official and "legally recognized line, fixed in a particular space, meant to mark off one political or administrative unity from another."[28] As for frontier, it commonly denotes territorial expansion, and usually into areas which are considered "empty" by the expansive state.[29] A frontier could also be seen as "a zone of contested political control that would have to be surveyed, mapped, and perhaps invaded and occupied before proper borders could be drawn."[30] Studying borders implies looking at the states that are invested in establishing, demarcating and controlling them. By looking at borders, one gets a sense of the extent to which a given state has been able to consolidate its territory and exercise power over societies that fall within the border.[31]

Meanwhile, borderlands refer to the region on both sides of a state border. They are places individuals and communities on each side of the border meet and overlap.[32] In that sense, the concept of borderland can be seen as an opposite to the concept of frontier.[33] A given state's ability to manage and control the borderland depends on its relationship with the region's elites. If a state manages to incorporate borderland elites into state power, then that would enable it to control the region's people. On the contrary, if a state fails in integrating those elites, this might lead it to resort to military force in response to a perceived breakdown of power in the borderland. However, the social dynamics of borderland are not only shaped by elites and the state but also by the people whose reaction

[28] Lars Rodseth and Bradley Parker, "Introduction: Theoretical Considerations in the Study of Frontiers," in *Untaming the Frontier in Anthropology, Archaeology, and History*, eds. Lars Rodseth and Bradley Parker (University of Arizona Press, 2005), 10.
[29] Michiel and Van Schendel, "Comparative History of Borderlands," 213.
[30] Rodseth and Parker, "Introduction," 6.
[31] Michiel and Van Schendel, "Comparative History of Borderlands," 214-215.
[32] Linda Darling, "Ottoman Borderlands, Frontiers, and Contact Zones," transcript of keynote address delivered at Princeton University, June 2010.
[33] Ibid.

to the imposition of a border often shapes life in the borderland. Because of that, one can speak of a "changing "triangle of power relations" between state, regional elite and local people in the borderland."[34]

Cross-border political networks gives the borderland's elites leverage over a given state as they are able to tap into the political capital of two neighboring states. If the neighboring states have shared interests, they might push towards quelling such networks.[35] However, if one state is working towards undermining the authority of a neighboring state, they might use such networks to that end.[36] As such, cross-border political networks indicate that it is more meaningful to speak of a double triangle of power relations between state, regional elites and local.[37] The particular configuration of this "double triangle" plays an important role in whether a borderland is quiet, unruly or rebellious.[38] According to Baud and Van Schendel's model, a quiet borderland is one where "the state, regional elite, and the local population are knit into a coherent power structure in which tension is relatively low."[39] As for the unruly borderland, it is one where even though the state might have incorporated regional elite into its structures, neither the state nor the elites are able to establish control over the local population which renders the borderland difficult to govern. In this scenario, regional elite lose their legitimacy among the population as they are viewed more as agents of the state than the protector of their rights and concerns.[40]

[34] Michiel and Van Schendel, "Comparative History of Borderlands," 219.
[35] Ibid., 226.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid., 227.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid., 228.

Tribes and Bedouins

The term *Bedouin* is an anglicization of the term *Bedu* in Arabic and it is used by to describe nomadic pastoralists who live off of raising livestock through natural graze and browse, as opposed to those who depend on agriculture or urban livelihoods (known as *Hadar* in Arabic).[41] In addition to referring to a form of lifestyle, the term *Bedouin* also refers to tribal confederations in Arabia.[42] The Bedouin are organized in tribes which have a "pyramid-like structure with real, living units at its base and the mythical ancestor at the top."[43]

A primary difference between tribes and states is in their approach to defense and security. Whereas states are based on hierarchical power and tend to monopolize the means of coercion for specific groups, tribes are based on collective responsibility where the "means of coercion are distributed throughout the group."[44] The distribution of power among ordinary tribe members means that they cannot be coerced by the tribe's leaders but must be won over. As such, it is not uncommon for tribe members to dissociate from a given tribe and join another one in case they do not approve of a given tribe's leadership. The shaikh, who often inherited his position, must consult the tribe's elders for him to rule effectively.[45] Especially among the Bedouins, who are more egalitarian compared to other tribes, the role of a shaikh or tribal leader is often exclusively limited to resolving conflicts within tribes and coordination communication with outsiders. Moreover, tribespeople's

[41] Dawn Chatty, "Introduction: Nomads of the Middle East and North Africa Facing the 21st Century," in *Nomadic Societies in the Middle East and North Africa: Entering the 21st Century*, ed. Dawn Chatty (Boston: Brill, 2005), 6.
[42] Ibid., 7.
[43] Dawn Chatty, "The Bedouin in contemporary Syria: the persistence of tribal authority and control," *The Middle East Journal* 64, no. 1 (2010), 30.
[44] Phillip Carl Salzman, "Tribes and Modern States: An Alternative Approach" in *Tribes and States in a Changing Middle East,* ed. Uzi Rabi (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), 2.
[45] M. Talha Çiçek, "introduction," in *Negotiating Empire in the Middle East: Ottomans and Arab Nomads in the Modern Era, 1840–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 19.

opposition to the state stems from the latter's attempts to monopolize practices including taxation, protection, and raiding. Bedouin tribes can be seen as nonstate people who inhabit "nonstate spaces." They are nonstate in so much as their primary mode of subsistence – pastoralism – is "fundamentally intractable to state appropriation."[46] The spaces that they inhabit are nonstate in the sense that states find it challenging to uphold and exercise its authority.[47] The characteristics of Bedouin tribes, including their social structure, oral culture, and pastoralism, are better seen as "adaptations to evade state capture and state formation" rather than "the mark of primitives left behind by civilization."[48]

Mandate System

The mandate system was introduced by the League of Nations in the aftermath of World War I to govern the territories which were formerly ruled by the defeated Ottoman and Hohenzollern empires. Those territories were assigned a mandatory power from among the victorious Allied powers – mainly France and Great Britain – who would in principle support them people of those territories to establish sovereign states and achieve independence. In practice, the mandate system represented a process where colonization and decolonization took place simultaneously.[49] In Iraq, and under pressure from the League of Nations, the mandate period saw calls for independence taken seriously by the British empire who supported the establishment of a parliament and a constitution, and advocated for Iraq's entry into the League of Nations.[50] On the other hand, British rule over Iraq between 1921 and 1932 was – at least in part – inspired by colonial rule in places such as

[46] James C. Scott, "Hills, Valleys, and States: An Introduction to Zomia," in *The Art of Not Being Governed* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009),6.
[47] Ibid., 13.
[48] Ibid., 9.
[49] Cyrus Schayegh, "The mandates and/as decolonization," in *The Routledge Handbook of the History of the Middle East Mandates* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 412-414.
[50] Ibid.

India and an ideal of order that was "unmistakably hierarchical and authoritarian."[51] Moreover, Britain's approach to social order was conflicted between two positions: establishing formal state institutions versus ruling through tribal confederations and their shaikhs.[52]

[51] Charles Tripp, "The British Mandate," in *A History of Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 30;36.

[52] Toby Dodge, "Understanding the Mandate in Iraq," in *Inventing Iraq: The failure of nation building and a history denied* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 2.

Chapter I: From Late Ottoman to Direct British Rule (1840-1920): The Shammar Jarba between Resistance to Centralization and State Cooperation

The dynamics shaping the relationship between the Shammar's elites and British officers during the mandate years had their origins in the late Ottoman period and the years of direct British rule between 1917 and 1921. After the Ottomans failed to forcibly settle the Shammar during the Tanzimat period, they reached a compromise with the tribal shaikhs whereby the Bedouin were allowed to maintain their nomadic ways among each other in return for their commitment to respect state authority over the settled populations. The late Ottoman period also saw the division of the Shammar across provincial boundaries and the rise of shared interests between tribal shaikhs and local provincial officials who, on multiple occasions, worked to maintain the authority of their allies among the Bedouin. However, and like the British officers who came after them, Ottoman officials learnt that tribal shaikhs were more than capable of amassing tribal support beyond state institutions to resist the central power's attempts at challenging their authority. On the other hand, the years of World War I and of direct British rule showed that the tribal shaikhs were divided in terms of their position from British occupation. Whereas some, such as 'Asi and Daham, cooperated with the British officers, others, such as 'Ajil Yawar, participated in the armed revolt of 1920 against direct British rule, which paved the way to indirect rule via the mandate system.

In this chapter, I will give a brief summary of the arrival of the Shammar in the Jazira and the earliest interactions between them and the Ottoman state in the first half of the nineteenth century. After that, I will detail how the unsuccessful attempts at settling the Shammar by the Tanzimat statesmen were followed by an uneasy yet mutually beneficial compromise between tribal shaikhs and Ottoman officials. I will then move on to explain

how tribal shaikhs had different responses to the British occupation of Iraq and conclude with arguing that the mandate period was characterized with uncertainty over the fate of the Mosul province and border disputes between Iraq and Syria, which allowed tribal shaikhs a considerable room for maneuver to maintain and expand their authority.

Late Ottoman Officials and the Shammar Jarba: An Uneasy yet Mutually Beneficial Relationship

The Shammar arrived in Syria and Iraq towards the end of the eighteenth century. They moved away from Najd (modern-day Saudi Arabia), primarily because of the Wahhabi insurgency there and for better access to pastures in the Jazira – the stretch of land between the Tigris and Euphrates stretching from the upper countryside of Baghdad to Diyarbakir – compared to northern Arabia.[1] The most powerful section among the Shammar was the Jarba branch, which was named after its first Shaikh, Faris al-Jarba, and which eventually took over the other branches that arrived in the Jazira.[2] The Shammar also took over the pastures which were previously frequented by other tribes that were in the region like the Tai and the Jubur.[3] In the early nineteenth century, the Ottomans struggled with the Shammar for two main reasons. First, the Shammar had arrived from a region where the Ottomans' attempts at consolidating their rule were repeatedly frustrated, which meant that the Bedouin tribesmen were not accustomed to central rule. Second, war with the neighboring Qajar state in the early nineteenth century meant that the Ottoman forces were occupied on the Persian front and could not be dedicated to reign in the Shammar tribesmen.[4] Even though the Ottomans failed to subjugate the Shammar to their authority,

[1] M. Talha Çiçek, "Introduction," in *Negotiating Empire in the Middle East: Ottomans and Arab Nomads in the Modern Era, 1840–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 21.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Samuel Dolbee, "The Locust and the Starling: People, Insects, and Disease in the Late Ottoman Jazira and After, 1860-1940" (PhD diss., New York University, 2017), 104.
[4] Ibid.

they still benefitted from the Shammar tribesmen by winning their military support in the wars against the Qajars, Egypt's Mehmed Ali Pasha, and the Mamluks of Baghdad.[5]

The fundamental change in the Ottoman approach towards the Shammar accompanied the Tanzimat reforms that were implemented across the empire. The Tanzimat statesmen – such as Midhat Pasha who became governor of Baghdad for three years after leading the modernization efforts in the Danube province of the empire and contributing to the first Ottoman constitution – wanted to standardize local administration by ensuring that all provinces are subject to the same legal regimes.[6] Without dividing the empire into administrative divisions, the Tanzimat statesmen believed that the state would not be able to "civilize" nomads and rid them of their "savage old customs."[7] The Tanzimat reforms also intended to regularize tax collection, which meant that settlement of nomads became much more crucial in the era of reform.[8] In the Jazira, Ottoman governors hoped that by fortifying settlements of Chechens and Kurds surrounding the pastures of the Shammar, then the Bedouins would be enticed to settle and abandon nomadism.[9] However, given that the settled tribes were not given enough technical and financial support to commit to agricultural cultivation, it was the settled tribes who turned to nomadism rather than the Bedouins turning into settled tribes as the Ottoman officials had originally hoped.[10]

Additionally, Ottoman officials aimed to provincialize the Shammar by redrawing provincial boundaries in ways that would make it tougher for its tribesmen to try and evade

[5] Samuel Dolbee, "Empire on the Edge: Desert, Nomads, and the Making of an Ottoman Provincial Border," *The American Historical Review* 127, no. 1 (2022), 138.
[6] M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, "The Tanzimat Era," in *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010), 86.
[7] Selim Deringil, "'They live in a state of nomadism and savagery': the late Ottoman Empire and the post-colonial debate," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45, no. 2 (2003), 327.
[8] Hanioğlu, "The Tanzimat Era," 89.
[9] Samuel Dolbee, "The Locust and the Starling,"124 -130.
[10] Ibid.

provincial authority. In 1871, the district of Zor (part of which today constitutes the province of Deir ez-Zur in Syria) in the province of Aleppo was made into a *mutassarriflik* to be administered directly from Istanbul and enlarged by attaching to it parts of Diyarbakir such as Nusaybin. The logic behind this modification was to reduce the ability of the Shammar tribesmen to escape authority through moving from one province to another.[11] Nevertheless, Ottoman officials' increased desire to control the Bedouin was not well-received by 'Abd al-Karim, one of the two Shammar brothers who led the tribe at the time.[12] Whereas 'Abd al-Karim was the paramount shaikh over the Shammar between Aleppo and Diyarbakir, his brother Farhan had the highest authority among the tribesmen between Mosul and Baghdad. Unlike Farhan, who had learnt Turkish in Istanbul and was more adept in dealing with Ottoman officials, 'Abd al-Karim revolted against the redesign of provincial boundaries and Midhat Pasha's attempts to compel him to settle.[13] The rebellion eventually ended with the execution of 'Abd al-Karim but the turmoil indicated that the heavy-handed approach at state control by the Tanzimat statesmen would not pass without violent, tribal resistance.[14] Moreover, in spite of repeated agreements between the Shammar shaikhs (Farhan and 'Abd al-Karim's successor, his son Faris) and the Ottoman state to settle and

[11] Ibid., 139-140.

[12] German orientalist Max von Oppenheim saw that 'Abd al-Karim was much more popular among the Shammar compared to Farhan who was closer to the Ottomans. Von Oppenheim explained that embodied the most prominent romantic ideals of the Bedouin, mainly heroism, nobility, and generosity. The German orientalist hints these qualities meant that 'Abd al-Karim was more respected by the Shammar tribesmen compared to Farhan. See Max von Oppenheim, "Shammar," in *Die Beduinen*, vol. 1., ed. and trans. Majid Shubbar (Beirut: Dar al-Warraq, 2007), 241.

[13] Dolbee, "The Locust and the Starling," 144-149; Faris, 'Abd al-Karim's successor did not accept Farhan as the paramount Shaikh of the Shammar in the Ottoman empire. He thought of Farhan as a peasant or *Fellah* who was not a true Shammar given that his mother was from Baghdad and his wife was from a Kurdish tribe. See Mohammed Jamal Barout, *Al Takawwon al-Tarikhi al-Hadith lil-Jazira al-Suriyyā: Asila w Ishkaliyyāt al-Tahawwol mn al-Badwana īla al-'Omran al-Hadari* [Modern Historical Formation of the Syrian Jazira: Questions and Issues Pertaining to the Shift from Bedouinism to Urbanism] (Doha: Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies, 2013), 87.

[14] Dolbee, "The Locust and the Starling,"151.

cultivate, the tribesmen continued to move across borders as Midhat Pasha's hopes for wide-scale settlement remained unfulfilled.[15]

Even if imperial expansion into the Jazira failed to turn the Shammar Bedouin into settled Ottoman subjects, it still had important consequences on state-tribal relations in the region. On the one hand, the Shammar were forced to abandon the practice of raiding sedentary areas and demanding *khuwwa* from their population.[16] They also had to pay taxes more regularly in partial fulfillment of their duties as imperial subjects. On the other hand, Ottoman officials realized that they need to be flexible in their approach and abandon the *Tanzimat* statesmen's zeal to uniform rule across the empire.[17] In the Jazira, the Ottoman government were forced to respect the access of tribesmen to pastures for grazing and to recognize their right in visiting cities and towns to buy resources such as wheat and sell goods such as wool.[18] The link between the empire and the Bedouin was the shaikh, who became a salaried state employee assigned the task of collecting taxes from his fellow tribesmen. In return for his tax collection services, the shaikh was entitled to a quarter share of the tax revenue.[19] The shaikh was also made responsible for protecting trade routes and ensuring that neither his fellow tribesmen nor members from other tribes raid travelers along the caravan roads. Because of these roles, Bedouin shaikhs – like other tribal chiefs across the empire – became indispensable to the Ottomans' efforts at exercising rule over the Jazirah.[20]

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[15] Ibid., 161; 164.

[16] M. Talha Çiçek, "Partnership, Provincialization and Conflict," in *Negotiating Empire in the Middle East: Ottomans and Arab Nomads in the Modern Era, 1840–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 173.

[17] This was also the case for other places in the empire such as Karak (modern-day Jordan). See Eugen Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 94; 214

[18] M. Talha Çiçek, "Partnership, Provincialization and Conflict," 173.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Resat Kasaba, *A moveable empire: Ottoman nomads, migrants, and refugees* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2011), 119.

Another factor that significantly shaped the relationship between the Ottoman state and the Shammar from 1870 until the onset of World War I was the increase in global demand for wool, which was produced by the Bedouins during that period. With the significant surge in wool exports, the Shammar gained more power for they were the ones responsible for overseeing pastoral production. Consequently, the relationship between the Shammar and urban merchants deepened as the latter paid in advance to the tribesmen for delivering fleece on time or even invested in sheep which they kept with the Bedouin to attend to their needs.[21] In terms of the relationship between the Shammar and the state, the increase in wool export had two important consequences. First, the additional income that the Shammar gained from the increase in wool exports signified that they were more likely to forego the practice of raiding and levying *Khuwwa* on sedentary populations. Second, the Shammar tribesmen, as the dominant actor in rural areas, were able to exploit the merchants' need for wool by raiding or stealing sheep when they wanted to express their dissatisfaction with certain state measures.[22] As the increase in wool exports also added to the state's treasury due to the increase in its tax base, imperial authorities had further interest in maintaining a peaceful arrangement with the Shammar and their shaikhs.

The Tanzimat efforts also had the effect of strengthening the provincialization of the Shammar Jarba and enhancing the relationship between its shaikhs and the provincial authorities of the territories which they resided in. For instance, the Shammar-Milli conflict shows how provincial authorities stood by the Shammar against incursions by other forces from different provinces. As head of the Kurdish Milli tribe which was appointed as a *Hamidiye* brigade, Ahmad Milli Pasha was assigned by Diyarbakir officials to protect the

[21] Sarah D. Shields, "Sheep, Nomads and Merchants in Nineteenth-Century Mosul: Creating Transformations in an Ottoman Society," *Journal of Social History* 25, no. 4 (1992), 778.
[22] Ibid., 782.

province against the Shammar.[23] Because of that, his men trespassed the provincial boundaries and occupied the Shammar's pasturage areas in Deir ez-Zur. As a response, the sub-governor of Zor protected Faris Pasha, the Shammar shaikh in the province. The dispute at the level of the tribes turned into a dispute at the level of the authorities of Zor and Diyarbakir as each side attempted to protect their respective tribal ally. The conflict only ended with the Young Turk revolution of 1908 when Ibrahim Pasha was charged and chased away given his loyalty to the deposed Sultan Abdul Hamid II.[24]

The ability of Shaikhs to mobilize forces across provincial boundaries continued despite the provincialization of the Shammar across three different provinces, Zor, Mosul and Baghdad. One incident that indicates the resilience of tribal solidarity was the attempt by the Mosul authorities to change the Shammar Shaikh in 1899. Then, the governor wanted to replace 'Asi, a son of Farhan Pasha, with first his brother Shallal and then his other brother Jarullah, who was closer to the authorities and urban merchants as he was responsible for the protection of their livestock.[25] While the governor and the administration pushed for the replacement of the strong-minded 'Asi, the latter called on his ally among the state officials, Ziya Pasha, who served as the head commissioner of the crown lands in Mosul.[26] Ziya lobbied on behalf of 'Asi and enticed ministers in Istanbul to reject his removal from his position. The conflict turned bloody as the Mosul administration sent the gendarmerie to accompany Jarullah's forces to detain 'Asi. However, the latter was able to gather forces from the

[23] Coincidentally, Ahmad Milli Pasha rose to prominence by playing a pivotal role in rallying Arab, Kurdish and Yazidi tribes to support the Ottoman state in crushing the Shammar insurgency led by 'Abd al-Karim in the 1860s. The *Hamidiye* brigades were para-military groups formed in 1885 by Sultan Abdul Hamid II. They consisted mainly of Kurdish tribesmen who were mobilized to protect the Ottoman-Russian frontier and contain the ambitions of Armenian nationalists in the eastern parts of the Ottoman empire. See Barout, *Al Takawwon al-Tarikhi al-Hadith*, 88;92-94.

[24] Dolbee, "The Locust and the Starling," 202.

[25] M. Talha Çiçek, "Partnership, Provincialization and Conflict," 192-196.

[26] Ibid.

Shammar and 'Anazah tribes from Baghdad, Aleppo and Deir ez-Zur and to deliver a decisive defeat to Jarullah. Eventually, in 1905, 'Asi was called into Baghdad and named paramount Shaikh of the Shammar in Mosul.[27] This displays how consent among tribesmen – given that 'Asi was more popular among the Shammar compared to his brothers – was a factor that Ottoman authorities could not neglect when dealing with the tribe.[28]

Shammar Shaykhs under Direct British Rule: Divided Allegiances and 'Ajil's Role in the 1920 Revolt

During World War I, the Shammar tribal elites were divided in terms of their allegiances. Humaidi, who was among the first tribal Shaikhs to have studied in the tribal school (*Mekteb-i Aşîret-i Hümâyunin*) in Istanbul, took a definitive stance in his support of the Ottomans after the occupation of Bagdad in March 1917.[29] Meanwhile, and even though 'Asi was reported by British officers to have taken his base in Nusaybin within Ottoman territory, his decision to side with the Ottomans was described as prudent rather than emanating out of a strong conviction towards the retreating empire.[30] On the other hand, Faisal, also one of the sons of Farhan Pasha, sided with the Sharif Hussein of Mecca and was in support of pushing Ottoman forces out of Iraq.[31] Towards the end of 1917, Faisal, who had received letters of support from the Sharif Hussein during his visit to Mecca, joined his brother 'Abd el 'Aziz and the latter's son, 'Ajil al-Yawar in Baghdad to set up an operational plan to push the Ottomans out of the northern Jazira. However, according to British sources,

[27] Ibid.; By 1911, 'Asi was reportedly the paramount Shaikh of the Shammar in the Ottoman empire. See Gertrude Bell Archive (GBA), Diaries, 3 April 1911.
[28] M. Talha Çiçek, "Partnership, Provincialization and Conflict," 196.
[29] Gertrude Bell and Arnold Wilson, *Review of the Civil Administration in Mesopotamia* (London: H.M Stationary Office, 1920), 42.; The *Mekteb-i Aşîret-i Hümâyunin* was opened upon the orders of Abdul Hamid II to educate the sons of tribal elites. See Eugene Rogan, "Aşiret Mektebi: Abdülhamid II's School for Tribes (1892–1907)," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 28, no. 1 (1996), 83-107.
[30] Bell and Wilson, *Review of the Civil Administration in Mesopotamia*, 42.
[31] British officers drafted a genealogy of the sons of Farhan (as they did with other tribal shaikhs). The genealogy is attached to the appendix. See IOR/L/MIL/17/15/42, *Military Report on Mesopotomia (Northern Jazirah)*, (India Office Records, 1922), 114.

'Abd el 'Aziz and Faisal quickly fell out and the former rejoined the Ottoman forces along with his son. Even then, British officers reported that 'Ajil and his father gave "ludicrously feeble" support to the Ottoman forces, and once the Ottoman government signed an armistice with the Allied forces in October 1918, they once again rejoined the British camp.[32]

During the period of direct British rule between 1918 and the official onset of the British mandate over Iraq in 1921, two important events occurred between the Shammar elites and British officers that were critical for the relationship between the two during the mandate period. Incidentally, both events involved 'Ajil al-Yawar. The first event took place in 1918 and involved 'Ajil and the British political officer of Mosul at the time. In a discussion between the two upon the request of the British colonel, the latter insulted 'Ajil by calling him a woman.[33] The Shammar shaikh was deeply offended by the remark that he abandoned the British officers and switched sides to the Kemalist forces.[34] The second event was less personal and more consequential to the overall political situation in Mosul. In 1920, a bloody revolt took place across Iraq against direct British rule; while the Sunni urban notables were opposed to losing their political authority to a Council of State that would be formed of British officers which would rule over Iraq, the tribal shaikhs resisted forceful British attempts at taxation.[35] The first major episode in the uprising against British rule occurred in Tal Afar in the Mosul province (Figure 1) where 'Ajil rallied tribesmen to oust British forces out of the province.[36] In June 1920, a group of soldiers led by the ex-Ottoman officer Jamil al-Madfaai marched on to Mosul from Deir ez-Zur to free the province from British control.

[32] Ibid.
[33] GBA, Gertrude Bell to her father, Sir Hugh Bell, 21 August 1921.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Charles Tripp, "The British Mandate," in *A History of Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010),40; 42.
[36] Ibid., 39.

On their way to Mosul, they passed by Nusaybin where 'Ajil was camped with his followers.[37] There, 'Ajil called upon them to join al-Madfaai's campaign to "liberate their home from the [British] enemy" and to not hesitate in their support of al-Madfaai's men.[38] 'Ajil personally joined the campaign and was involved in the battle which ended with the Arab occupation of Tal Afar.[39] He was reportedly on the battle frontlines as his alleged heroics resulted in the death of multiple British soldiers.[40] The Arab occupation of the town did not last for more than a week but it firmly indicated 'Ajil's resistance to direct British rule.[41]

Figure 1 Map of Localities Significant to Shammar-State Relations during the Mandate Period

[37] Al-Madfaai also called on 'Asi and his grandson, Daham, to join his campaign. However, the former refused due to his belief that the campaign was bound to fail. See Leonard Nalder, *Administration Report of the Mosul Division of the year 1920* (Baghdad: Government Press, 1921), 6.

[38]'Ali al-Wardi, *Lamahat al-Ijtima'iyya min Tarikh al-'Iraq al-Hadith* [Social Insights from the Modern History of Iraq], *The Middle East Journal, The Middle East Journal* 24, no. 2 (1970).

[39] From Gertrude Bell's account on the battle of Tell 'Afar, it seems that the Shammar tribesmen were the dominant faction among those who marched on the town. See GBA, Gertrude Bell to her father, Sir Hugh Bell, 7 June 1920.

[40] Al-Wardi, *Lamahat al-Ijtima'iyya*, p. 160.

[41] The map in figure 1 shows the locations of important events or individuals that shaped state-Shammar relations during the mandate period. In addition to Tal Afar, Sinjar was a disputed town between French and British officers during the mandate period. As for Nusaybin, the border town between Turkey and Syria, it was the base of 'Asi who influenced the relationship between the Shammar and British officers from there. Al Badi is the town where Daham and 'Ajil clashed in 1925 (Chapter II), and Al Hasakah is the city where French and British officers co-organized a conference to coordinate tax collection (Chapter III).

There were multiple factors that encouraged Great Britain to shift from direct rule over Iraq to exercising indirect influence via the mandate system. Between 1918 and 1920, the British attempted to govern Iraq through direct rule and along the lines of their approach to colonial India.[42] However, this contributed to the bloody popular revolt in Iraq against British rule in 1920. Opposition in Iraq to direct imperial rule, along with the emphasis on self-determination by president Woodrow Wilson of the United States, the hefty financial cost of direct rule, and the unpopularity of colonial expansion among the British public after World War I, pushed the British Empire to modify its approach to government to a form of indirect rule.[43] This represented the context within which Great Britain was awarded the mandate over Iraq by the League of Nations in 1920.

In 1921, the British installed Faisal I – son of Sharif Hussein of Mecca – as King of Iraq. The decision to enthrone Faisal I was due to his and his father's steady cooperation with the British during the Arab revolt against the Ottomans in 1916 and his overall good relations with the British who offered him protection after the fall of his short-lived Arab Kingdom in Damascus to the French in 1920.[44] Under the mandate system, the two pillars of the Iraqi state, the King and his ministers, were to be supported and – at least officially – guided by the British high commissioner and advisers, respectively.[45] Although the high commissioner did not have fully authoritative control over the state, he did have the upper hand in situations where he faced opposition from the King. For instance, when Faisal I encouraged

[42] Toby Dodge, "International Obligation, Domestic Pressure, and Colonial Nationalism; The Birth of the Iraqi State under the Mandate System," in *The British and French Mandates in Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Nadine Meouchy and Peter Sluglett (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004), 145-146.
[43] Ibid., 146-148.
[44] Charles Tripp, "The British Mandate," in *A History of Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 46-47.
[45] Dodge, "The Birth of the Iraqi State," 150.

opposition to the treaty that legalized British hegemony over Iraq, the high commissioner – backed up by British military prowess and specifically the Royal Air Force (RAF) – stifled radical political parties and newspapers and bombed tribal insurgents in central Iraq who protested against the treaty. Eventually, Faisal I was coerced to ratify the treaty in 1922.[46] As for the British advisers, their number and contribution decreased as the mandate years went by. By 1927, Britain's policy towards Iraq shifted from one that was officially advisory to another that was aimed at disengagement and propping up an Iraqi state. The British mandate over Iraq ended in 1932 when Iraq was admitted to the League of Nations; however, British troops continued to operate bases in Iraq until 1958.[47]

After Great Britain was assigned as a mandatory power over Iraq by the League of Nations, two important issues remained unresolved: the status of Mosul and the border between Syria and Iraq. Turkey and Iraq (backed by Britain) remained in dispute over the status of Mosul as each state claimed the province as part of its territory. When the two states were unable to settle the dispute through bilateral negotiations, they turned to the League of Nations to determine the fate of the province. In 1925, the League of Nations sent out a commission to Mosul which decided that the province should be assigned to the Kingdom of Iraq.[48] As such, the province's status was uncertain for the first four years of the mandate period. Another issue was the disputed border between Iraq and Syria, which was only demarcated in 1932 i.e. the year the British mandate over Iraq officially ended.[49] More specifically, Britain and France (the mandatory power over Syria) were in disagreement over

[46] Tripp, "The British Mandate," 52
[47] Peter Sluglett, "Les mandats/the mandates: Some reflections on the nature of British presence in Iraq (1914-1932) and the French presence in Syria (1918-1946)," in *The British and French Mandates in Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Nadine Meouchy and Peter Sluglett (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004), 121.
[48] Sarah Shields, "Mosul, the Ottoman legacy and the League of Nations," *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies* 3, no. 2 (2009), 219-220; 229.
[49] Harith Hasan and Kheder Khaddour, "The Transformation of the Iraqi-Syrian Border: From a National to a Regional Frontier," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2020.

the town of Balad Sinjar, which was part of the Northern Jazira where the Shammar Jarba were partially based. Given their disagreement over the border's demarcation, the British and the French were cautious not to overextend their authority over the border areas so as not to provoke a confrontation between each other's forces over the issue. This meant that that the border between the two countries was fluid throughout the mandate period, despite seeing efforts by British officers to impose more control on cross-border mobility in the second half of that period (as will be discussed in Chapter III). The uncertainty created by these two critical, disputed matters conditioned the context within which the relationship between the British mandate and the Shammar tribe was forged.

Concluding Remarks

During the late Ottoman period, the Shammar shaikhs became indispensable mediators between the central state and the *Bedouin* tribe. After Ottoman officials failed at settling the tribes and ending their nomadic ways, they realized they had to depend on tribal shaikhs to rule over the Shammar. Along with an uptick in global economic conditions towards the end of the nineteenth century, this brought the tribal shaikhs and local state officials closer to each other as their interests became ever more entangled. Despite this rapprochement, the relationship remained uneasy, especially when the state took decisions that went against popular tribal opinion.

With the British occupation of northern Iraq in 1917, some of the tribal shaikhs cooperated with the new rulers while others, such as 'Ajil al-Yawar, had a more hostile stance. 'Ajil actively participated in the 1920 revolt that was a major factor in convincing British officials to move from a direct rule over Iraq to a more advisory role under the mandate system. Coincidentally, the uncertainty during the mandate period amid Britain's

struggle with Turkey over Mosul and the dispute with French Syria over its border with Iraq provided ‘Ajil with new opportunities to expand his power and authority.

Chapter II: The Shammar Jarba and the British Mandate (1921-1926): Fluctuating Loyalties, Internal Struggles, and New Opportunities

During the first half of the mandate period, the state-Shammar relation was subject to multiple entanglements across tribal, national, and international scales. In their selection of the paramount Shaikh of the Shammar to liaise between the state and the tribesmen, British officers could not only factor for tribal custom, but they also had to account for the King's tribal preferences. Their decision on who to assign as paramount Shaikh of the Shammar was all the more important amid the turmoil of northern Iraq where both French Syria and Kemalist Turkey were ready to pounce and make use of any conflict with the Shammar tribesmen to win them over and expand their influence. From the perspective of tribal elites, the emergence of multiple, nascent states from the ruins of the Ottoman empire came with familiar challenges and new opportunities. While the new states had ambitions similar to that of the late Ottoman empire in terms of subjecting the nomads to state authority and compelling them to end their non-state activities, the conflict between those new states provided new opportunities for tribal elites whose authority among their tribesmen and access to tribal networks across borders increased in value.

In this chapter, I will focus on the Iraqi state's assignment of a paramount shaikh of the Shammar and the aftermath of that decision. I will argue that British officers unwillingly undermined tribal custom in their approach to the tribe's leadership to accommodate Faisal I's demand for power and ensure access to intelligence related to their struggle with Turkey. The undermining of tribal authority came at a hefty price as French Syria invested in the resulting dispute among the Shammar's elites. This contributed to the unruliness of northern Iraq (from the perspective of British officers) as the nascent states were more interested in undermining each other's authority than reigning in the nonstate Shammar tribesmen.

Intelligence over Tribal tradition: 'Ajil wins over Faisal I and the British

With the onset of the British mandate over Iraq in 1921, British officers' utmost concern towards Northern Iraq was to ensure the various groups' allegiance to the nascent kingdom and to counter Turkish efforts to sway the locals' support in favor of their quest to attach the Mosul province to the Turkish republic. Given that the Shammar Jarba were the largest nomadic group in the Jazira and some of their shaikhs such as Ajil al-Yawar were involved in military upheavals against British rule in the past, British officers were wary of Turkey supplying arms to the Shammar and encouraging them to fight against them in Iraq. For instance, one military officer who wrote a report mapping out the different tribes and the political allegiance of their sections in the northern Jazira commented that "in the event of hostilities against the British, the Shammar would most certainly be supplied with arms and ammunition by the Turks."[1] Additionally, while British officers viewed Bedouin shaikhs' involvement in agricultural cultivation positively, they did not pursue sedentarization as their primary goal in their approach towards the nomads. Given that some tribal shaikhs – such as 'Ajil and 'Asi – chose to get involved in agriculture based on their own decision, there were instances where British and Iraqi officials provided agricultural support as an incentive to encourage tribal Shaykhs to remain loyal to their camp.[2]

Asides from the conflict with Turkey over Northern Iraq, British military officers considered the Shammar Jarba as a major source of instability in the region as they were seen as the "most serious menace of establishment of law and order in the Jazirah."[3]

[1] IOR/L/MIL/17/15/42, *Military Report on Mesopotomia (Northern Jazirah)*, (India Office Records, 1922), 112.
[2] Asides from the British offer to Daham which will be discussed below, Faisal I reportedly approached 'Ajil to become partners in an agricultural venture as a way to make up for 'Ajil's losses from restrictions on raiding in 1926. The King mentioned offered to provide the initial capital and required machinery for 'Ajil to cultivate land near Jabal Sinjar. See TNA, AIR 23/146, Memorandum No. C/216 from the Ministry of Interior to the Secretary to His Excellency the High Commissioner for Iraq, January 28 1926.
[3] *Military report on Mesopotamia*, 111.

Another British officer described the Shammar as "a public pest, living on robbery and blackmail."[4] The British also believed that the Shammar's unruliness did not emerge with the arrival of their rule as their intelligence explained that "they are still as they were in the time of the Turks, a source of disturbance in the Mosul Wilayat."[5] Additionally, British officers also saw their rule over the Shammar Jarba complicated by existence of different factions within the tribe with conflicting political affinities with the British, French, and Turkish forces and towards Faisal I's government in Baghdad.[6] This, along with British officers' distrust of Shammar tribesmen's loyalty and their tendency to change their allegiance at a whim, showcases why the Shammar tribesmen were seen as the major factor in the region's unruliness.[7]

In order to establish control over the Shammar Jarba, British officers continued the Ottoman policy in the Jazira by assigning government shaikhs to "protect government interests, keep the road secure and as far as possible recover loot."[8] During the period of direct rule by British forces prior to 1921, British officers assigned Humaidi as paramount Shaikh of the Shammar Jarba in Iraq but he was replaced by Daham al-Hadi, grandson of the leading figure of the Shammar, 'Asi. The reasons behind this change was that the British officers were hoping that the support of 'Asi to Daham would mean that the latter would have considerably more support among the Shammar tribesmen compared to Humaidi and, accordingly, would be able to have wider authority over them. Whereas British officers initially approached 'Asi to be the paramount Shaikh of the Shammar due to his "great

[4] See Leonard Nalder, *Administration Report 1919: part 1. Mosul* (Madras, n.d.), 11.
[5] The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 1 from November 15, 1920," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 1, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 12.
[6] Ibid., 108.
[7] Military report on Mesopotamia, 111.; The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 1 from November 15, 1920," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 1, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 12.
[8] See Leonard Nalder, *Administration Report of the Mosul Division of the year 1920* (Baghdad: Government Press, 1921), 6.

reputation of sagacity," their belief that he was among the few shaikhs whose "fingers pull most of the strings," and the respect that he enjoyed among most of the Shammar tribesmen, The elderly shaikh refused on the grounds of his old age and nominated Daham, his favorite grandson.[9] British officers did not object to Daham's assignment as paramount Shaikh of the Shammar given that he, like his grandfather, did not participate in the bloody uprising against the British forces in in Tell 'Afar in 1920. Because of his grandfather's support, British officers believed that Daham would be able to control most of the Shammar Jarba in Mosul.

During his stint as paramount Shaikh of the Shammar Jarba, Daham was able to gain concessions from British officers by threatening to switch his allegiance to Turkey. In his first year as government shaikh of the Shammar Jarba, Daham was described by one senior British officer as "extremely young, extremely ignorant and extremely vain."[10] The main reason behind that was because Daham was asking for the same salary as the paramount shaikh of the historical rival tribe of the Shammar, the 'Anazah, even though the latter was much older and much more experienced. Additionally, part of the British officers' frustration with Daham was that he was unable and unwilling to uphold one of his main duties as a paramount Shaikh, which was to protect the settled populations from raids and *Khuwwa*.[11] He defended that strictly enforcing the ban on raiding would undermine his authority and decrease his legitimacy among the tribesmen.[12] Moreover, British officers' main concern with Daham was not because of his character or his inaction with regards to raiding, but

[9] In 1911, 'Asi was described by Gertrude Bell as a very worthy and respectable man. See GBA, Diaries, 3 April 1911.
[10] Nalder, *Administration Report of the Mosul Division of the year 1920*, 7.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.

because of his suspected overture towards the Kemalist forces in Turkey in early 1921.[13] British officers thought it was likely that Daham would declare his animosity towards them after receiving reports that the Kemalist forces were putting serious effort to win over the Shammar tribesmen. To ensure Daham's loyalty, British forces offered him 10% of returns from the salt monopoly, the rights to cultivate a village in Mosul (which he would have the right to own after five years), and the sole right to issue passes to Shammar tribesmen without which they would not be able to access the markets of the city of Mosul to buy resources or sell goods.[14] The lucrative British offer to Daham highlights how anxious the British officers were about losing tribal support and weakening their case for permanently keeping the Mosul province with the Iraqi state. By mid-1921, Daham returned to the British forces and accepted their offer.

Even though Daham's performance was deemed satisfactory by British officers, he was stripped of the paramount shaikhship in 1922 as it was handed to 'Ajil al-Yawar, who had two years earlier fought against them at Tell 'Afar. In a report on affairs in the Mosul division in 1921, British officers seemed to have changed their view of Daham from someone described as inexperienced to a responsible shaikh who is willing to keep his commitments. The British officer seemed to be pleased that Daham was protecting the road to Syria from raids and cultivating "in earnest" in one of the province's villages. While Daham was stepping up in his role as government Shaikh, 'Ajil al-Yawar was reconsidering his allegiances and taking steps to reconcile with the British officers.[15] Described as strikingly charismatic and

[13] Leonald Nalder, *TS Administration Report of the Mosul Division for 1921* (1921), 20.
[14] The Salt tax was collected by essentially tax farmers who have a monopoly over the selling of salt in the major cities. The monopoly was won through an auction. See Leonald Nalder, *TS Administration Report of the Mosul Division for 1921* (1921), 70.
[15] While it is difficult to ascertain the exact reasons behind 'Ajil's advances towards Faisal I given the lack of statements on the matter by the Shammar shaikh, British officers thought that 'Ajil's shift in allegiance could have been because of four reasons: high prices of goods in Mardin (Turkey) compared to Mosul, increased threat of French invasion of south-east Turkey from eastern Syria and Turkish inability to fight such an

cunning, 'Ajil left a favorable impression on Gertrude Bell. In one of her letters to her father, she described 'Ajil as follows: "… from the first moment I saw him I reckoned him foremost of the Shammar shaikhs in character and influence. Faisal, with our concurrence, sent for him, and he came at once. He is 6 ft 4 in. odd, a powerful, magnificent creature; not an ounce of spare flesh on him; hands you would like to model, not too small but exquisitely shaped."[16] In another letter, Bell described Ajil as a "perfect man of the [Bedouin] world, a good soldier… and a competent statesman."[17] Eventually, unlike his grandfather who was able to defeat Ottoman official's attempts at stripping him of his position as shaikh of the Shammar, Daham failed to mount enough support to stave off the challenge of 'Ajil to his leadership.

The assignment of Ajil as paramount shaikh of the Shammar could have been due to three factors: his personal charisma, his access to intelligence due to his personal networks, and his direct relationship with Faisal I. From the British officers and advisors' statements on Ajil, it seems that his ability to compel and charm others helped him in landing the shaikhship. Second, and relatedly, Ajil's access to intelligence was extremely valuable for British forces in their struggle with the Kemalist forces. For instance, in June 1922, Nuri Said, an ex-Ottoman officer who was chief of staff of the Iraqi army at the time, was reported to have been very impressed by the intelligence service provided by Ajil due to his extensive network in Turkey and Syria.[18] Ajil's intelligence provided the British with important insights on the movements of both French and Turkish forces; he alarmed them of French efforts to take the town of Nusaybin which was under Kemalist control. He was able to learn of this

invasion, and British threats in the form of RAF flights over Nusaybin. See TNA, AIR 23/256, Memorandum from the Major General of the 18th Division to the General Headquarters, June 8 1921.

[16] GBA, Gertrude Bell to her father, Sir Hugh Bell, 21 August 1921.

[17] GBA, Gertrude Bell to her father, Sir Hugh Bell, 30 July 1922.

[18] Charles Tripp, "The British Mandate," in *A History of Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 45.

update given his good repertoire with the town's *kaymakam* or governor who was expected by the French forces to hand in the town upon their advance.[19] Bedouin elites' roles as intelligence providers were essential to British administration not just during their struggle with Turkey over northern Iraq but also on separate occasions in Iraq and beyond.[20]

'Ajil's strong and direct relationship with Faisal I was also a main factor in why the former pushed for him to be assigned as paramount shaikh. This shows how the internal power struggle at the tribal level was entangled with that of the national level between the King and the British officers. To begin with, 'Ajil won the Shaikship by catering to Faisal I rather than to the British officers. When 'Ajil first approached the British officers in Baghdad, he expressed that he would be willing to change his allegiance only if Iraq came under the rule of an Arab government headed by Faisal I.[21] Additionally, it is clear from various statements by British officers that it was Faisal I's decision rather than theirs to install 'Ajil as paramount Shaikh of the Shammar.[22] The King's own calculation behind assigning Ajil was to push back against British influence by supporting local powers that are loyal to him rather than to the British. Faisal I pressed for greater power vis-à-vis the British officers through various means, one of which was undermining the tribal shaikhs who he believed were pro-British.[23] Daham was certainly seen as such by British officers who was described as pro-

[19] The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 13 from July 1, 1922," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 2, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 221; The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 14 from July 15, 1922," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 2, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 248.

[20] Fletcher. Running the Corridor, 201.

[21] The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 13 from May 15, 1921," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 1, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 59; The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 15 from June 15, 1921" in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 1, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 79.3

[22] Leonald Nalder, *TS Administration Report of the Mosul Division for 1921* (1921), 22; TNA, AIR 23/57, Memorandum from the Special Service Officer, Mosul, January 1922.

[23] Toby Dodge, "The Mandate System, the End of Imperialism, and the Birth of the Iraqi State," in *Inventing Iraq: The failure of nation building and a history denied* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), p. 21.

British and anti-Iraq government in multiple reports.[24] The King also had a strong relationship with 'Ajil and trusted him the most among the tribal leaders of Mosul. In early 1923, when Amir Zaid, Faisal I's brother, and Taha al-Hashimi, an ex-Ottoman officer who was assigned by Faisal I as the commander of troops in Mosul, visited the region to mobilize irregular forces in a possible military confrontation with Turkey, they called upon 'Ajil who accompanied them in their tour among the different tribes.[25] 'Ajil was made responsible by Amir Zaid to entice men from different tribes to join the irregular forces.[26] As for the British officers, it is possible that they did not mind 'Ajil's promotion and accommodating Faisal I's quest for more authority as long as 'Ajil did not rebel against their rule or strengthen Turkey's case for taking over Mosul.

[24] TNA, AIR 23/57, Memorandum from the Special Service Officer, January 1922; TNA, AIR 23/57, Memorandum from the Special Service Officer, Mosul to Aviation Baghdad, October 1922.
[25] The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 4 from February 14, 1923," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 2, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 536; Taha al-Hashimi mentions in his memoirs how 'Ajil accompanied him and Amir Zaid in their tour around Mosul in January 1923 and how King Faisal I was invited for lunch at 'Ajil's house when he visited the province in May of that year. Taha al-Hashimi, *Muthakarat Taha al-Hashimi 1919-1943* [Memoirs of Taha al-Hashimi 1919-1943] (Beirut: Dar al-tali'a, 1967), 73-74.
[26] The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 4 from February 14, 1923," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 2, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 536.

Figure 2 Group of the Shammar Camel Corps, including 'Ajil's brother Hatrush [27]

In effect, British officers prioritized access to intelligence and accommodating Faisal I's need to strengthen his authority over tribal tradition and the balance of power within the Shammar Jarba. By stripping Daham of the shaikhship and handing it to 'Ajil, the Iraqi government went against the word of the Shammar Jarba's elder leader, who was described on multiple occasions by British officers as the "real" paramount Shaikh of the Shammar Jarba.[28] By assigning 'Ajil as the paramount shaikh of the Shammar Jarba, British officers sacrificed the internal stability of the Shammar Jarba, and as a result, the northern Jazira in

[27] The image of the camel corps was taken by Gertrude Bell in 1922. Image from GBA, PERS_H_027, Personalia, 1 November 1922; British officers asked 'Ajil to form the Shammar camel corps in early 1922. The British officials hoped that working in the corps would curb the "lawlessness" of the Shammar tribesmen. The corps did not last beyond 1922, possibly due to the internal struggle within the Shammar between 'Ajil and Daham, which will be further dwelled on in the next section. The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 5 from March 1, 1922," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 2, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 45; The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 9 from May 1, 1922," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 2, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 129.

[28] Leonard Nalder, *Administration Report 1919: part 1. Mosul* (Madras, n.d.), 11; TNA, AIR 23/258, Note by Special Service Office, Mosul, June 1923.

Iraq for the sake of their struggle with the nascent Turkish republic and the authority of the King in Baghdad.

Politics across scales: Daham plots his way back

Daham became enraged after being replaced as paramount shaikh of the Shammar Jarba. When it became apparent that 'Ajil was reconciling with the British officers and the Iraqi government, 'Asi attempted to gain favors with the British officers presumably in support of Daham by offering his services to capture Nusaybin from the Kemalist forces.[29] However, the British coldly replied that they would prefer not to involve him in their conflict with Turkey. To appease Daham and avoid a clash between him and 'Ajil, the former was called in to Baghdad where he was promised by the Ministry of Interior that he would be able to maintain his shaikh title and sole authority over his direct followers who would only be able to get passes to do business in Mosul via his approval (and not 'Ajil's).[30] However, this offer was rejected by Daham. He expressed his dismay by stirring trouble through closing off the road that connected Mosul to Deir ez-Zur where he looted a convoy of caravans.[31] 'Asi was also mobilizing support for Daham as he expressed his grievances to Hammu Sharu, a leading Yazidi tribal chief from the region of Jabal Sinjar, and kept his allies on alert to attack 'Ajil's men.[32]

[29] The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 27 from December 15, 1921," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 1, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 631-633; The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 2 and 3 from January 15, 1922," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 2, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 14.

[30] The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 15 from August 1, 1922," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 2, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 268.

[31] The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 8 from April 15, 1922," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 2, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 129; The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 10 from May 15, 1922," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 2, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 150-151.

[32] The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 11 from June 1, 1922," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 2, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 171.

Daham's displeasure with the situation did not go unnoticed by the British officers.[33] Several reports by British officers placed the number of followers of Daham at least as much as those of 'Ajil.[34] Daham was also reported to have more sympathy among the Shammar shaikhs compared to 'Ajil.[35] Because of that, the political secretary of the British high commissioner made it clear to 'Ajil that forming and maintaining a Camel Corps of 200 Shammar tribesmen – a task which he was assigned by British officers – would not be possible without mending his relationship with Daham.[36] Another military officer explained that the more the Iraqi government lent support to Ajil, the more it raised the ire of Daham and 'Asi. Because of that, the British officer stated that the Camel Corps are "doomed to failure" during 'Asi's lifetime. Moreover, the changes in the way British officers mapped the Shammar Jarba shows that they had become much more aware of the divisions among the Shammar than they had previously thought. In 1919 and 1920, and even though they were aware of the presence of several, influential tribal shaikhs with conflicting allegiances, British officers still thought it was meaningful to represent the Shammar as one unit confined within tribal, provincial, and national boundaries (Figure 3).[37] A map of the Shammar Jarba in 1923 shows that the British officer had come to realize that not only were the provincial and tribal boundaries falsely assumed but so was the view of the Shammar Jarba as one unit and the imperviousness of the national border (Figure 4).[38]

[33] It is important to note that British officers' close following of the shifting allegiances of tribal leaders was not exclusive to the Shammar tribe. British officers were also wary of Yazidi tribal chiefs switching their allegiance to the Kemalist forces during the early years of the mandate period. TNA, AIR 23/257, Note by Special Service Office, Mosul, June 1922

[34] TNA AIR 23/57, Memorandum from the Special Service Officer, Mosul to Aviation Baghdad, October 1922.

[35] Ibid.

[36] The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 13 from July 1, 1922," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 2, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 221; The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 14 from July 15, 1922," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 2, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 248.

[37] Leonard Nalder, *Administration Report 1919: part 1. Mosul* (Madras, n.d.)

[38] Leonard Nalder, *Administration Report of the Mosul Division of the year 1920* (Baghdad: Government Press, 1921)

Figure 3 Tribal Map of Mosul Division in 1919

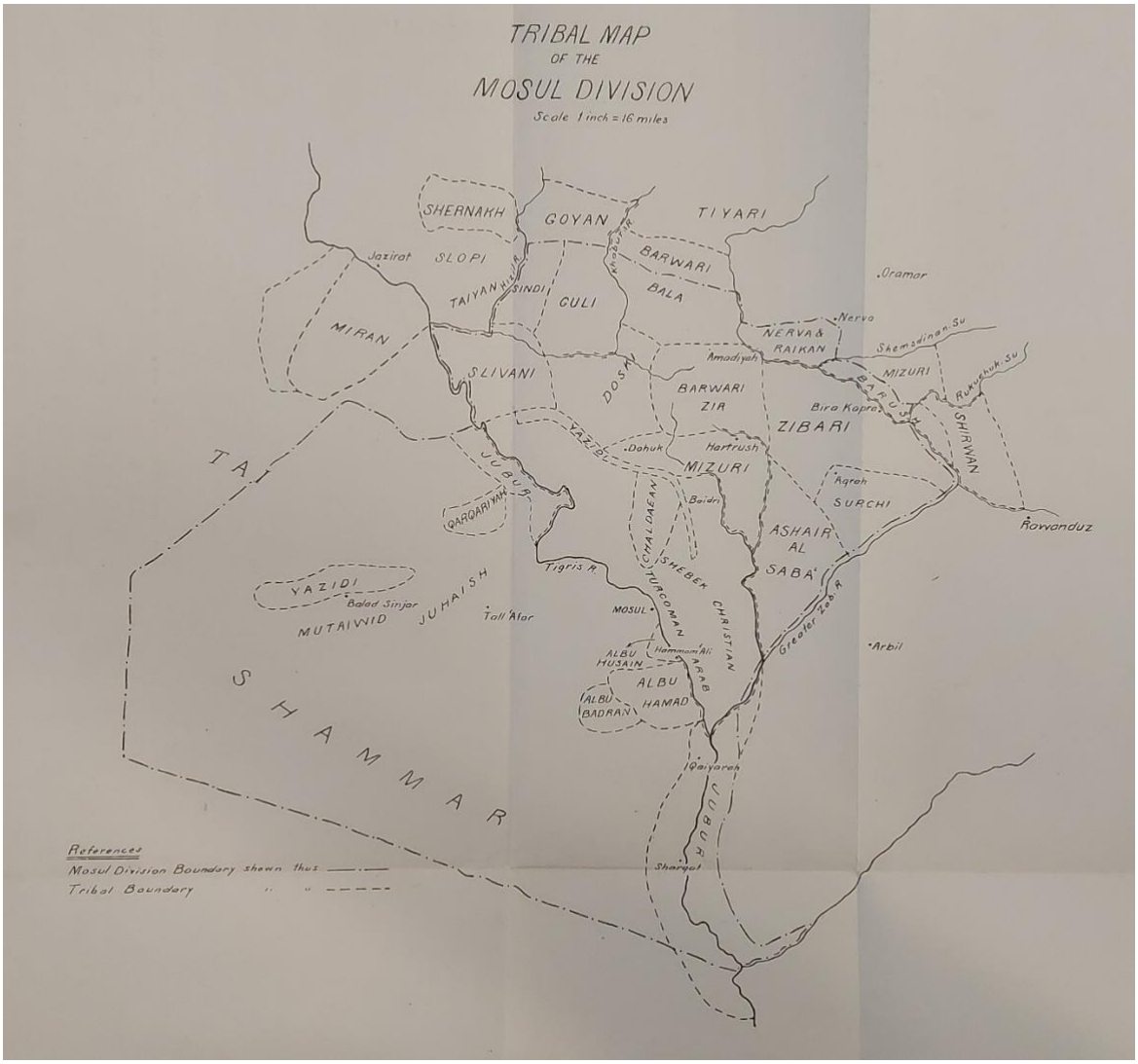
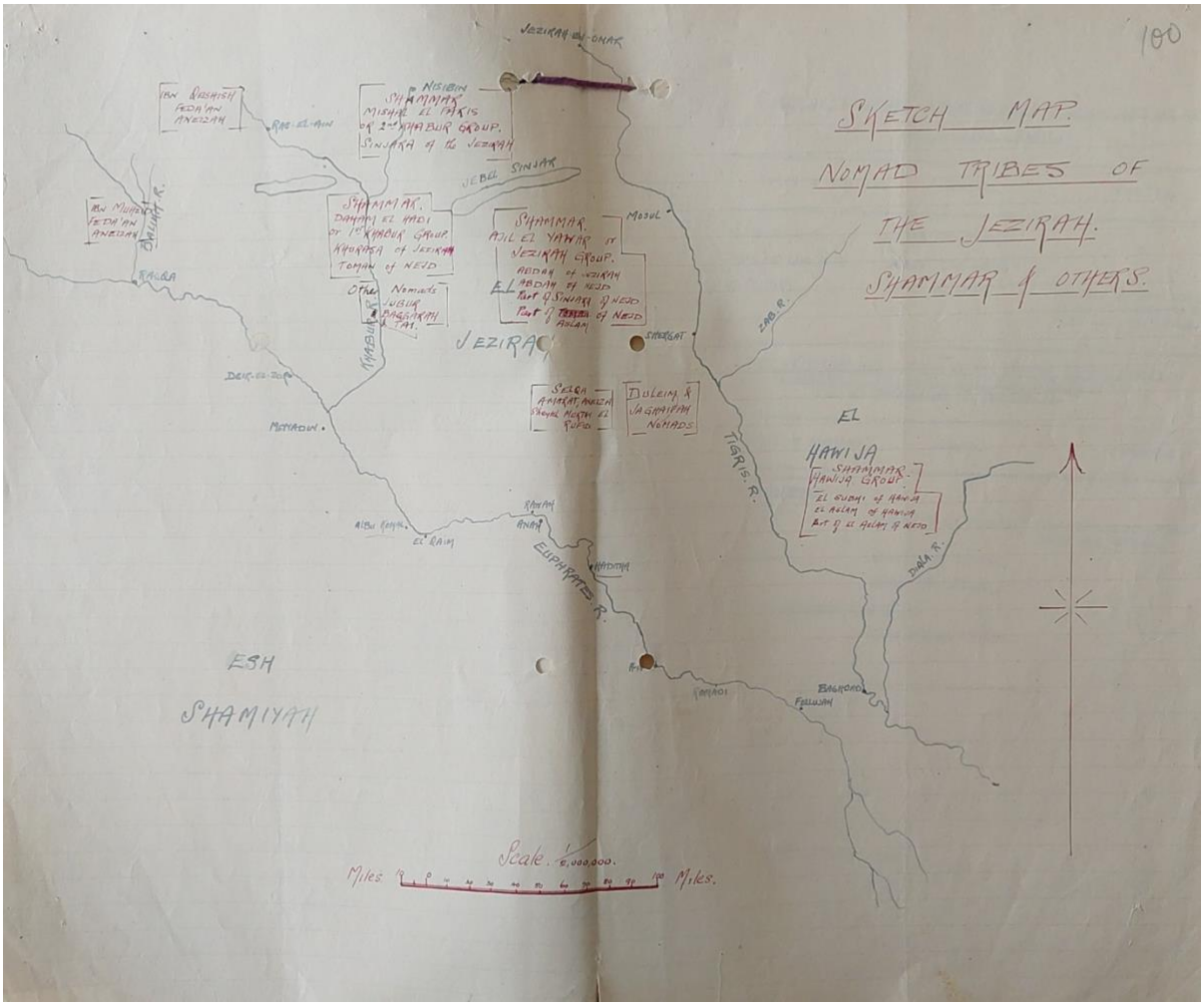


Figure 4 Map of the Shammar Jarba in early 1923



Towards the end of 1922, news reached British intelligence that both the French and the Kemalists were trying to lure in Daham to their side.[39] In November 1922, French officers reportedly made an offer to Daham whereby he would be made the leader of a camel corps whereas the Kemalists offered him a monthly salary of 1000 British pounds if he were to move to Nusaybin.[40] In the meanwhile, Daham was occupied in settling disputes of other tribes and trying to profit off of such settlements.[41] His threats to attack the Yazidis of Sinjar

[39] The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 22 from November 1, 1922," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 2, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 420.
[40] Ibid.
[41] The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 2 from January 15, 1923," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 2, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 495.

to settle an internal dispute led to a response of the *kaymakam* of Sinjar to call for a show of military air force power over the area. This forced Daham to retreat and take a step back.[42] Daham was also seen as a continued source of trouble by the British as he continued to levy taxes on motor convoys passing by on the Deir ez-Zur-Mosul road.[43] Eventually, by February 1923, the *mutasarrif* or provincial governor of Mosul called upon Daham and ordered him to stop the raids on the Deir-Mosul road. Nevertheless, Daham's tense relations with the British and Iraqi authorities seemingly did not repel the French from trying to lure him in.[44] Even though the British questioned the French authorities' attempts to win over Daham given his troublesome actions in Iraq, they viewed his potential departure to Syria positively, given his "insoluble problem" with Ajil.[45] By mid-1923, British officers had continued to receive reports of French officers making offers to Daham. By then, the French offer reportedly consisted of supporting Daham to raise a corps of 300 camels on the condition that he commits to paying taxes to the Syrian state.[46]

French forces in Syria were interested in luring Daham to their side to better exercise control over Bedouin tribes in eastern Syria and to weaken British authority over Bedouin tribes overall. By the end of 1922, France was struggling to impose order in the eastern parts of Syria bordering Iraq. A pro-Kemalist Shammar shaikh – 'Abd Kareem – detained the *kaymakam* of Al Hasakah in north-east Syria while he was touring the area.[47] The French retaliated by bombing his camps and forced him to move closer to an uncle of Daham's near

[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid, 496.
[44] The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 5 from March 1, 1923," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 2, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 553-554.
[45] The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 8 from April 15, 1923," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 3, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 20.
[46] The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 10 from May 15, 1923," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 3, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 51.
[47] The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 18 from September 15, 1922," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 2, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 340.

Nusaybin.[48] Soon after that, 'Abd al-Karim sought refuge with a shaykh from the Tai tribe[49] French officers order the paramount shaikh of the Shammar in Syria, Mishal Faris, to attack the Tai shaikh; however, he was unable to bring the fight to the Tai as he got stuck in the muddy marshes of Nusaybin. Shortly after, Mishal Faris was relieved of his position of government shaikh of the Shammar in Syria, which meant that the position was vacant for another Shammar Shaikh – like Daham – to occupy.[50] Additionally, French forces were wary of the perceived British attempts at forging a pan-Arab union of tribes that would surround Syria and at forming a "form an anti-Syrian tribal alliance on Iraqi territory."[51]

Upon receiving the French offer, Daham and his men moved to Syria around May 1923.[52] However, it did not take long for French forces to become embroiled in Daham's struggle with 'Ajil as the former made use of his newly state-attributed authority to undermine the latter's claim to the tribe's leadership in Iraq. Around October 1923, Daham rallied tribal support from sections of other tribes such as the Tai, Baqqarah, and Aqaidat and camped 35 kilometers away from Ajil who responded by also mobilizing rival sections of the Tai, Mishal Faris and his followers, and refugee Shammar from Najd. 'Ajil's involvement with Mishal raised the ire of the High Commissioner of Syria who considered Mishal to be a "French Shaikh" who should not be led by another Shaikh effectively working for the British.[53] Daham's raiding of Iraqi travelers crossing the Khabur river was also possibly a move intended to weaken Ajil's leadership as he was the one responsible for ensuring the

[48] Ibid.
[49] The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 19 from October 1, 1922," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 2, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 356.
[50] The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 20 from October 15, 1922," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 2, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 376.
[51] Laura Stocker, "THE 'CAMEL DISPUTE': CROSS-BORDER MOBILITY AND TRIBAL CONFLICTS IN THE IRAQI–SYRIAN BORDERLAND, 1929–34," in *Regimes of Mobility: Borders and State Formation in the Middle East, 1918-1946*, ed. Jordi Tejel and Ramazan Hakkı Öztan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022), 342.
[52] Intelligence Report No. 9, The Residency, Baghdad, May 1, 1923, 35. [FO 371/9009]
[53] Intelligence Report No. 22, The Residency, Baghdad, November 15, 1923, 238. [FO 371/9010]

safety of travelers entering into Syria.[54] Additionally, Daham reached out to non-Bedouin tribes and Iraqi state officials to regain his role as paramount Shaikh of the Shammar in Iraq. He sent a message via his uncle Hachim Al 'Asi to the *Muhasib* or treasurer of Mosul explaining that he is a subject of Mosul, regardless of whether it comes under British or Turkish rule.[55] Furthermore, Daham attempted to reinvigorate his old alliance with Hammu Sharu and lobbied him to attack Ajil.[56] Daham was insistent on his demand to exercise rule over the Shammar as he claimed that he did not mind if Ajil continued to be recognized as paramount Shaikh by the government in name only.[57]

By the start of 1924, Daham could not gain the same power, trust and support from the French state as 'Ajil did from the Iraqi state under British tutelage. In February 1924, Ajil was voted as a deputy from Mosul in the newly established constituent assembly. As for Daham, he had to settle for a shared leadership over the Shammar in Syria with his other rival, Mishal Faris. Whereas Daham was assigned by the French as the nominal *kaymakam* of the route extending from Deir to Al Badi in Northern Iraq, Mishal was made responsible of the route between Deir and Al Hasakah in Northern Syria; meanwhile Ajil was responsible of the road connecting Al Badi to Mosul.[58] Perhaps Daham's disappointment with his position in Syria gave him further incentive to pursue his deep-seated wish to dethrone 'Ajil from his position. Around March 1924, Daham again camped 40 kilometers away from where 'Ajil was based; he was obliged to retreat after he was confronted with a fleet of British armored cars and after the high commissioner in Baghdad communicated with the

[54] Intelligence Report No. 19, The Residency, Baghdad, October 4, 1923, 185. [FO 371/9010]; The Khabur river runs parallel to the current Syrian-Iraqi border and extends from south of Deir ez-Zur and up to Al Hasakah.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.
[58] The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 1 from January 10, 1924," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 3, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 324.

consul in Beirut to request from the French authorities to force him to withdraw.[59] By mid-1924, the French's patience with Daham quickly ran out, mainly because of his looting of caravans on highways and disruption of trade along his routes; as a response, he was rounded up by the French and expelled from Syrian territory under threat of aerial action.[60]

After being expelled from Syria, Daham went back to Iraq where his feud with 'Ajil was recharged. Upon his arrival, he tried to work out his strained relationship with Iraqi authorities through the paramount Shaikh of the Dulaim tribe.[61] There was also news that he entertained the thought of switching his allegiance to the Kemalists as it was reported that he had visited Turkey and received money from the officers there.[62] This happened around the same time that Kemalist forces were reportedly calling on 'Asi to rally his followers so that they can march together on to Mosul.[63] As per the British SSO in Mosul, Daham demanded from the Turkish officers the same subsidy and support that was given to his archrival 'Ajil by the British officers.[64] It is likely that the Turkish officers rejected to meet Daham's demands given that he did not eventually join their forces. Soon after, Daham continued on his quest to retain the position of paramount Shaikh of the Shammar by camping near Al Qaim and mobilizing a considerable force in preparation to attack 'Ajil.[65] British intelligence was aware that the debacle with Daham will not go away, especially given

[59] The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 11 from May 29, 1924," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 3, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 498.
[60] The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 18 from September 4, 1924," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 3, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 550; The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 22 from October 30, 1924," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 3, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 572; TNA, AIR 23/278, Periodical Report by Special Service Officer, Mosul, October 28 1924.
[61] The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 23 from November 13, 1924," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 3, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 576.
[62] The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 24 from November 27, 1924," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 3, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 583.
[63] TNA, AIR 23/260, Weekly Report by Special Service Office, Mosul No./1462, June 24 1924.
[64] TNA, AIR 23/261, Weekly Report by Special Service Office, Mosul No.J/17, October 5 1924.
[65] The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 25 from December 11, 1924," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 3, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 588-589; Al Qaim is a border town south of Al Badi and to the east of Deir ez-Zur. See Figure 1.

that the Shammar's elderly leader 'Asi – who was based in Nusaybin – continued to support him.[66] The political secretary to the High Commissioner was also aware that Daham's attempts to turn the Shammar against 'Ajil – who was already struggling to establish order on the Mosul-Badi road – will only be strengthened the more the latter is seen as an effective agent of the government:

> "In fact his ['Ajil's] position is undergoing the usual process of decay which befalls any chief who permits himself to assume towards his tribe too much attitude of on agent of government. Invariably such a chief finds his tribesmen falling away from him and adhering to a less complaisant rival who offers to support tribal rights and freedom against government control."[67]

Tensions between Daham and 'Ajil temporarily receded as the French – possibly after hearing of Turkish attempts to win him over – were able to convince the latter to return to Syria where he was to maintain a camel corps force, receive a monthly subsidy, and protect the roads in the Syrian portion of the Jazira.[68] 'Asi also had a proposal that he believed would end the feud between the two rivals. In early 1925, he left Turkey and settled in Tal Afar north of Mosul where he suggested that he be made paramount Shaikh of Mosul as he was the first of the Shammar shaykhs to be offered the position back in 1918 (which he refused and nominated Daham in his place).[69] There is no evidence that the British seriously entertained 'Asi's proposition, presumably due to his old age for he was declared dead less than a year after his return to Iraq.[70]

[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.
[68] The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 15 from July 13, 1925," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 4, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 82; The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 17 from August 20, 1925," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 4, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 100.
[69] The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 1 from January 7, 1925," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 4, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 6;
[70] The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 26 from December 24, 1925," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 4, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 193.

The "Insoluble Problem:" Daham strikes 'Ajil

Unsurprisingly to 'Ajil, it was only a matter of time until Daham resumed his mission to undermine his authority.[71] Between April and August 1925, there were multiple yet contained skirmishes between Daham and 'Ajil's men across the border.[72] In September 1925, Daham approached several Yazidi chiefs of Balad Sinjar and reportedly reached a friendly understanding with them to gain their support in his next attacks on 'Ajil. Daham hoped to take advantage of the Yazidis suffering from 'Ajil's followers' regular depredations against their villages, and to invest in their hopes to get back at 'Ajil.[73] Soon after, Daham approached 'Ajil through his uncle Hachim with a proposal that showed he was not willing to make any significant compromises. He insisted on reclaiming leadership over the Shammar of Iraq while accepting that 'Ajil remained paramount Shaikh only as far as the Iraqi government was concerned. He also requested to be allowed to enforce taxes on the Deir-Mosul road, and to be handed a monthly allowance of 1000 rupees. 'Ajil replied that it was up to the Iraqi government to meet his conditions and passed on the proposal to the High commissioner who, in turn, stalled and did not give a definite answer. British intelligence also indicated that 'Ajil was willing to make a concession in Daham's favor and settle on land to cultivate if he was provided with adequate access to water by the state.[74]

[71] The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 15 from July 23, 1925," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 4, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 82.
[72] The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 9 from April 30, 1925," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 4, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 193; The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 19 from September 17, 1925," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 4, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 120.
[73] The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 20 from October 1, 1925," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 4, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 129.
[74] The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 2 from January 21, 1926," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 4, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 211.

By March 1926, tensions between the two reached a boiling point when allies of Daham belonging to the Jubur tribe attacked 'Ajil's brother.[75] This rang the alarms of the highest authorities in Iraq as the consul general in Beirut was requested by the High Commissioner of Iraq to pressure the authorities in Deir to prevent the Juburis from assisting Daham.[76] These interventions, however, did not refrain Daham from pursuing his attack. Towards the close of March, Daham and his Jubur allies gathered close to 'Ajil's post near Al Badi. In response, 'Ajil withdrew from his position and the British sent in armored cars to maintain his post.[77] On April 2, 1926, a considerable force of 2000 tribesmen attacked the armored cars.[78] The British retaliated by sending in the air force where Daham's men were bombed and gunned before they could pass the frontier.[79] In the aftermath of this fight, Daham was wounded and two prominent members of the Juburis were killed. 'Ajil made use of the British support to counter-attack as he sacked Daham's camp and pushed him back into Syria.[80]

Despite his defeat, Daham was called in to Beirut and was appointed as paramount Shaikh of the Shammar in Syria, provided with a force of 200 camels, and given a monthly allowance of 500 British pounds. He was also assigned the responsibility of maintaining security in the Syrian portion of the Jazira. It seemed that the French were impressed by Daham's willingness to go head to head with the British armed forces. The French high commissioner's response to the complaints of his British counterpart concerning the April attack on 'Ajil indicated that the French were not willing to condemn Daham. Instead, they

[75] The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 6 from March 18, 1926," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 4, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 233.
[76] Ibid.
[77] The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 8 from April 15, 1926," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 4, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 250.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.

blamed 'Ajil's provocations for ensuing the entire conflict. In contrast to Daham, 'Ajil saw a reverse in his fortunes in the period following the attack. His subsidy was decreased by the British on the grounds that he did not do enough to stop counter-raids by the Shammar against the 'Anazah in Syria. Incidentally, the recent conflict with the 'Anazah was instigated by none other than Daham who had attacked them in Syria and then retreated back into Iraq in November 1925.[81] Reinvigorated by the French support, Daham employed additional methods to weaken 'Ajil's power. He tried to lure Shammar tribesmen away from Iraq into Syria by claiming that restrictions on raiding are looser under French authority.[82]

The high commissioner of Iraq became gravely concerned about Daham's interventions in Iraq. He was particularly troubled by Daham's claim that the French are less strict in response to raids compared to the British. He complained to his consul-general in Beirut that tribes will chose to launch their raids from Syria if it is "generally understood that the Syrian authorities permit raiding, large numbers of tribesmen from Iraq will move into Syria for the purpose of enjoying the greater license to exist there."[83] In an attempt to reduce cross-border tribal altercations, the high commissioner of Iraq organized a tribal meeting to resolve outstanding disputes between the various tribes along the Syrian-Iraqi border. The meeting was attended by tribal leaders – including 'Ajil and Daham – in addition to government and mandatory representatives from Syria and Iraq. The meeting concluded with a reconciliation between Ajil and Daham.[84] However, it took only a few months for the conflict to reignite and for Daham to continue plotting against his rival through inciting

[81] The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 16 from August 3, 1926," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 4, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 296.
[82] The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 19 from September 15, 1926," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 4, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 310.
[83] The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 20 from September 28, 1926," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 4, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 317.
[84] The Residency, "Intelligence Report No. 19 from April 28, 1927," in *Political Diaries of the Arab World,* vol. 4, ed. Robert Jarman (Cambridge Archive Editions, 1998), 394.

tribesmen against paying taxes to ‘Ajil, and claiming that his actions have the support of French officers in Syria.

Concluding Remarks

Amid the dispute between Turkey and British Iraq over Mosul, tribal shaikhs were able to make use of the conflict between the two states to their advantage. This was made apparent through the engagement of both Daham and ‘Ajil with the British officers. With regards to the former, his threat of shifting his allegiance to the Kemalist forces allowed him to get more concessions from the British officers early on during the mandate period. As for the latter, his access to intelligence on military and political updates within Turkey strengthened his case to seize the paramount shaikhship away from Daham. ‘Ajil was able to highlight his importance to the British officers amid their approach to the northern Iraq as a frontier to be defended against Turkish incursions.

The uneasy relationship between French Syria and British Iraq also created an opportunity for tribal shaikhs to maintain and retain their authority. The internal struggle between ‘Ajil and Daham was not just entangled with the political dynamics in Baghdad between the King and the British officers but was also intertwined with the competition between French and British officers’ over tribal loyalty and territory in the north of Iraq. British Iraq’s loss of Daham and his followers was French Syria’s gain; as French officers lured in Daham to increase their influence among the Shammar and undermine British authority over northern Iraq.

The Iraqi state’s decision to depose of Daham without taking into account tribal custom and support did not go by without considerable costs for the British side. What British officers described as an “insoluble problem” between Daham and ‘Ajil was – unintentionally – of their own doing. In the context of the struggle over influence between

French Syria and British Iraq, the ability of tribal actors (such as Daham) to push back against state intervention (Daham's ousting) by allying themselves with other state actors (French officers) increased. The alliance between tribal shaikhs and state authorities during the mandate period represented a continuity in state-tribal relations from the late Ottoman period.

Given the uncertainty over the fate of Mosul during the first half of the mandate period, British officers tolerated the non-state activities of Shammar tribesmen. The fear of losing the Shammar to French Syria or, even worse, to the Kemalist forces meant that the British officers had to accommodate tribal activities such as raiding and levying *Khuwwa*. This also represented a continuity with the late Ottoman period where an uptick in non-state activities coincided with periods of turmoil and military conflict. After the settlement of the "Mosul Question" however, British officers' tolerance for non-state activities decreased as they sought to further subjugate Shammar tribesmen to state authority. As will be discussed in the next chapter, this reduced tribal shaikhs' room for maneuver but did not eradicate their power given the continued disputes of British Iraq with its neighboring countries.

Chapter III: The Shammar Jarba and the British Mandate (1926-1933): Tax Disputes and Failed Attempts at Direct State Intervention

After guaranteeing that the fate of the Mosul province resided with the state of Iraq and settling the Mosul Question with the Turkish Republic, British officers in Iraq moved towards the consolidation of the nascent state's borders with its neighboring countries and ensuring its fiscal sustainability by increasing its tax revenues. This evidently meant that British officers had to put in measures that restricted the mobility of Shammar tribesmen and facilitated their taxation. The success of such measures also depended on the cooperation of the French officers who were running the Syrian state on the other side of Iraq's northwestern border. Towards the end of the mandate period, the British officers learnt that it was exceptionally challenging to increase and maintain the control of the Iraqi state in areas where mobile populations moved relatively freely across the border and neighboring states actively worked on undermining its authority. British officers also found it difficult to subdue tribal authority to state territorial sovereignty and to impose the logic of state hierarchy on nomads whose political order was based on voluntary association mediated by tribal shaikhs.

In this chapter, I will focus on British officers' approach to collecting taxes from the Shammar tribesmen to show how the Iraqi State under the British mandate failed to establish full control over the Shammar tribe. I argue that there were two main reasons behind British officers' failure to subject Shammar tribesmen to the state's authority. First, in their plans to coordinate the process of tax collection and increase its efficiency, British officers exhibited a misunderstanding of the way tribal leadership worked and a disregard of both tribal custom and needs. Second, and given the ongoing dispute between France and Great Britain over the delineation of the border between Iraq and Syria, French officers

actively pushed Shammar elites on the Syrian state's payroll to establish their authority over tribesmen on the Iraqi side of the border to expand the area under de facto Syrian authority. As for tribal elites such as 'Ajil al-Yawar, they remained essential to the Iraqi state's attempts at governing the Shammar given the failed experiment at direct state intervention in tax collection from nomads in the borderland. However, tribal elites also had to be cautious to not overreach in their roles as tax collectors on behalf of the state as their followers were able to disassociate themselves from them and move to join other Shammar Shaykhs in neighboring countries.

Tax Collection: State Restrictions on Cross-Border Raiding Re-Ignite Conflict Between 'Ajil And Daham

Up until 1927, the Iraqi state did not impose any taxes on the Shammar tribesmen.[1] The decision in 1927 to start imposing taxes on the Shammar coincided with a shift in the overall British policy towards Iraq. In that year, Britain moved towards disengaging from Iraq and putting effort towards enabling an independent Iraqi state. This happened under pressure from the British public opinion that was against committing additional resources to Iraq and the League of Nations which became more assertive about the building of an efficient Iraqi state as the mandate progressed.[2] The introduction of taxes on the Shammar coincided with significantly lower *Khuwwa* revenues to tribal shaykhs who were forced to decrease the *Khuwwa* rates on sheep merchants to half its value compared to the years before 1928.[3]

[1] TNA, AIR 23/278, Letter from the Residency to the High Commissioner of Syria, March 31 1928.
[2] Toby Dodge, "International Obligation, Domestic Pressure, and Colonial Nationalism; The Birth of the Iraqi State under the Mandate System" in *The British and French Mandates in Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Nadine Meouchy and Peter Sluglett (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004), 156.
[3] In his letter to the Minister of Interior in Baghdad in March 1928, the provincial governor of Mosul defended the Shammar shaykhs' right to continue levying Khuwwa indicating that there was a discussion among British and Iraqi officials to completely ban the levying of Khuwwa. The provincial governor mentioned that 'Ajil and the sheep merchants from Mosul reached an agreement between each other to halve the *Khuwwa* rate. The provincial governor explained that "the time for the discontinuance of the Khawah has not come yet specially

As the Iraqi state moved towards increasing its resources, it imposed the same tax that was imposed on the Shammar during the late Ottoman period and used the same tax collection methods. The *wadi* tax (or *widi* as it was referred to in the British sources) was a cattle tax that was calculated based on a fixed sum per animal.[4] Whereas, in principle the tax collectors should have estimated the tax after an accurate counting of the animals in a given heard (also known as *ta'dad al agnam*), the method used by both the Ottoman and British forces relied on the estimates provided by the shaikhs.[5] This was seen as a pragmatic approach given that tribesmen could easily hide away their cattle. Also similar to the Ottoman approach, the Shaikhs were given a share of the taxes paid by the tribesmen as a way to persuade them to cooperate in the tax collection process.[6] When Iraqi authorities, like the Ottoman ones before them, suspected that a Shaikh did not collect their own estimate of the taxes that should be collected, a certain sum was deducted from the Shaikh's salary equal to the amount of tax that he failed to collect.[7]

The Iraqi states introduction of taxes on the Shammar also coincided with a crackdown on raiding by Bedouin tribes. In early 1927, British officers entered into a provisional agreement with the French officers to ban cross-border raiding.[8] The major

when the Shammar are not accustomed to non-raiding and non-encroachment except for the last short period." In addition to the Iraqi state's increased desire to monopolize taxes, the economic downturn of 1928 and the drop in demand on wool could have played a role in sheep merchants' complaints against the Shammar's *Khuwwa.* See TNA, AIR 23/278, Translation of a Letter No.1973 dated 23rd February 1928 from the Mutasarrif Mosul Liwa, to the Ministry of Interior, Baghdad, February 23 1928.

[4] M. Talha Çiçek, "Taxation: The collection of Shammar and Anizah Duties," in *Negotiating Empire in the Middle East: Ottomans and Arab Nomads in the Modern Era, 1840–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 203-204.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., 205.

[7] Ibid.

[8] British officers' stance against raiding began to gradually harden starting in January 1926. In response to raiding and counter-raiding between the Shammar and the 'Anazah that spilled into Syria, British officers agreed with the 'Ajil and the paramount shaikh of the 'Anazah, Fahad al-Hadhdhal, to allow raiding between the two tribes on the condition that it did not involve tribesmen from outside Iraq and that it remains contained within Iraqi borders. However, after the two shaikhs failed to contain the raiding of their tribesmen according to this

impetus behind the agreement had little do with the social realities of the Shammar in the northern Jazira or even the relationship between the Iraqi and Syrian states in their shared borderlands. Rather, British officers sought to ban cross-border raiding to mend the relationship of the Iraqi state with another neighboring country, Saudi Arabia. Certain sections of the Shammar and the *Akhwan* Bedouin of Najd (Saudi Arabia) were involved in intense rounds of raids and counterraids.[9] Upon the request of Saudi Arabia's King 'Abd al-Aziz, and in order to prevent the costly damage left behind by *Akhwan* raids into Iraq, British officers sought to prevent Shammar tribesmen from conducting raids against the *Akhwan*.[10] Nonetheless, given that the Shammar tribesmen were able to evade the Iraqi state's control by temporarily relocating into Syria, British officers saw that it was essential to enter with an agreement with the French officers there to "regulate the affairs of frontier tribes."[11]

The provisional agreement between Iraq and Syria to curb cross-border raiding disregarded tribal structure and custom in two important ways. The first article of the agreement stated that every "incursion" by tribes subject to Syria and Iraq into neighboring states will be treated as an "aggression," which would require a reparation by the states where they are subjects.[12] However, what the Syrian and Iraqi states considered as incursions and acts of aggression were considered as tribal custom by tribesmen, including Ajil. When the Shammar shaikh was asked to do more to halt inter-tribal raiding, he

agreement, British officers changed their stance by September 1926 and banned both internal and external raiding.
TNA, AIR 23/146, Weekly Report by Special Service Office, Ramadi No. eD/10/1, January 1 1926; TNA, AIR 23/150, Telegram No. 457 from the High Commissioner, Baghdad to British Consul, Beyrout, September 17 1926.

[9] The *Akhwan* consisted of tribesmen belonging to different tribes in Najd who subscribed to the Wahhabi creed of Islam. See Ash Rossiter, "Survival of the Kuwaiti statelet: Najd's expansion and the question of British protection," *Middle Eastern Studies* 56, no. 3 (2020), 382.

[10] The National Archives (TNA), AIR 23/376, Copy of Despatch No. 1265, from the Secretary of State for the Colonies, London, to the High Commissioner for Iraq, Baghdad, 30 December 1926.

[11] TNA, AIR 23/289, Provisional Agreement between Iraq and Syria for the regulation of the affairs of frontier tribes, January 1927.

[12] TNA, AIR 23/376, Provisional Agreement between Iraq and Syria for the regulation of the affairs of the frontier tribes, January 1927.

explained that he could not put a halt on a practice that had been going on for hundreds of years.[13] Raiding was also an essential part of the tribal economy as it ensured distribution of resources among the different sub-sections of a given tribe.[14] Additionally, the first article clearly stipulated that the chief of the tribe will be considered responsible of the incursion. This assumed that raids took place under the central command of a tribal leader who has the power to enforce the prohibition of raids upon his followers. The Syrian and Iraqi states assigned responsibilities to tribal leaders according to the principles of modern state-building, mainly hierarchy and centralization. However, this was bound to fail given that it went against the social contract of *Bedouin* groups which was based on the distribution – rather than the concentration – of the means of coercion among the Bedouin.[15]

Another major issue with the agreement was that the French and British officers had different interpretations of some of its articles which paved the way for heightened tensions between 'Ajil and Daham in relation to tax collection. French Officers considered that the provisional agreement implied that Iraqi authorities should cooperate with them in collecting taxes from those evading taxation by Syrian authorities. British officers rejected the French officers' interpretation by referring to the second article of the agreement that asserted that if a tribe crosses from Syria into Iraq (or vice versa), then they would automatically come under the control of the government of the territory to which they have passed in "all matters on which law and order are affected, as well as for the recovery of loot."[16] This meant that while French officers claimed the right to tax Shammar tribesmen

[13] TNA, AIR 23/154, TELEGRAM No. 7876 from the Ministry of Interior to the mutasarrif Mosul Liwa, June 27 1925.
[14] Mehdi Sakatni, "From camel to truck? Automobiles and the pastoralist nomadism of Syrian tribes during the French mandate (1920–46)," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 39, no. 1 (2019), 164.
[15] Phillip Carl Salzman, "Tribes and Modern States: An Alternative Approach" in *Tribes and States in a Changing Middle East*, ed. Uzi Rabi (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), 2.
[16] TNA, AIR 23/154, TELEGRAM No. 7876, June 27 1925.

fleeing from Syria in Iraq, British officers saw that any Shammar tribesmen present in Iraq during the period of tax collection had to pay taxes to the Iraqi state. The British officers' position was more practical as there was no way to differentiate Syrian from Iraqi Shammars for the tribesmen did not carry identification documents at the time. Additionally, whereas French officers argued that tribal authority took precedence over state territorial sovereignty, British officers claimed otherwise.[17]

The dispute between French and British officers heightened the competition between Ajil and Daham over taxing their fellow tribesmen and leading the Shammar. To begin with, tribal elites made use of the tax collection duties assigned to them by the Iraqi and Syrian states to enrich themselves. Informants working for the British Air intelligence claimed that 'Ajil was underreporting the taxes collected on behalf of the state and keeping the funds collected to himself which was made possible given that there were no tax receipts to allow for proper accounting.[18] Because of that, 'Ajil was reported to be particularly keen on ensuring that cattle-owners do not underreport their flock and reduce his tax base.[19] Tribal elites also made use of their role as tax collectors and security mediators to undermine the authority of tribal competitors. For instance, given his role in guaranteeing the security of merchants exporting cattle into Syria, 'Ajil was reported by the SSO in Mosul to have intentionally chosen a route where Daham and his followers were unable to levy tolls on sheep merchants from Mosul.[20]

[17] TNA, AIR 23/155, Telegram from the High Commissioner of Iraq to the High Commissioner of Syria, March 31 1928.
[18] TNA, AIR 23/155, Memorandum from Special Service Office, Mosul to Air Staff Intelligence Headquarters, BAGHDAD, No.I.M/05B, August 11 1927.
[19] Ibid.
[20] TNA, AIR 23/289, Memorandum from Special Service Office, Mosul to Air Staff Intelligence Headquarters, BAGHDAD, No.I.M./07. E, January 17 1927.

Daham also used his role as tax collector to undermine the authority of 'Ajil in northern Iraq. Towards the end of 1927, Daham – with the support of French officers – crossed into Iraq to collect taxes from the Khurusa subsection of the Shammar tribe. British officers including the Administrative Inspector of Mosul and the High Commissioner of Iraq, protested against Daham's actions and claimed that sections that move into Iraq should pay taxes to the Iraqi government unless they can prove that they have already paid taxes to the Syria state.[21] Daham, however, did not heed the British officers' protests and actively lobbied the Shammar tribesmen to resist paying taxes to 'Ajil by claiming that the Iraqi and Syrian governments agreed that they should be treated as Syrian subjects. Seeing that his archrival has the support of his government, 'Ajil also rallied for support from Iraqi authorities and contended that the Khurusa tribesmen would not pay without "pressure" from the Iraqi government.[22]

In his quest to take control over the Shammar and profit from their taxes, Daham's argument to entice the Khurusa tribesmen to pay taxes to him instead of 'Ajil provided an example of the contradictions inherent to tribal leadership during the mandate period. In a letter from Daham to Khurusa tribesmen who crossed into Iraq to avoid being taxed, he explained that the Khurusa is one tribe rather than two (i.e. one in Iraq and another in Syria) and that they are obliged to pay him taxes wherever they might be, especially since according to him, the provisional agreement between Iraq and Syria on tribal affairs meant "there are no frontiers for nomad tribes."[23] At the same time, he explained that he is

[21] TNA, AIR 23/155, Telegram No. 562 from the High Commissioner, Baghdad to Consul-General, Beyrout, October 16 1927.
[22] TNA, AIR 23/154, Telegram No. GRC/2493 from Administor Inspector Mosul to Advisor to the Ministry of Interior Baghdad, October 16 1927.
[23] TNA, AIR 23/155, Translation of Daham al Hadi's Letter addressed to Sultan al Falaj, Shuthaith and Dughaiyim, October 1927.

employed by the Syrian government who have compelled him to collect taxes on its behalf from tribesmen under his leadership and that the penalty for not paying taxes would be a fine which is double the amount of the tax value.[24] In his letter, Daham alluded to the unity of the tribe and denied that state borders divided it into two. In that sense, Daham saw that tribal allegiance trumped state subjecthood which, paradoxically, undermined the authority of his employer i.e. the Syrian state.

Tax Cooperation between Syria and Iraq: Direct State Intervention Fails to Avoid Tribal Conflict

When Daham's verbal threats failed in submitting the Khurusa tribesmen to his authority, he moved on to more violent methods to force them to pay up. In August 1928, Daham raided the Khurusa tribesmen and detained 200 camels as security until they pay him the taxes.[25] A month after that incident, the High Commissioner of Iraq mentioned that Daham was forcibly trying to push the Khurusa into Syria and that "his action has approval in principle of French [authorities]."[26]

In order to avoid an armed clash between Daham and 'Ajil due to disputes related to tax collection, the French and British officers agreed to hold a conference to come up with a protocol on tax collection that would reduce ambiguity and conflicts between both sides. The conference, which was also aimed at settling claims between different tribes present across the border between Syria and Iraq, took place in the city of Al Hasakah in north-eastern Syria in February 1929 and was attended by British, French, Iraqi and Syrian officials along with tribal elites, including 'Ajil and Daham.[27] To coordinate tax collection, the officials

[24] Ibid.
[25] TNA, AIR 23/156, Weekly Report by Special Service Office, Mosul No. I.M./1, August 20 1928.
[26] TNA, AIR 23/156, Telegram No. 312 from High Commissioner, Baghdad to Consul-General, Beyrout. September 7 1928.
[27] TNA, AIR 23/156, Summary of the Process-Verbaux of the Hassecha Conference, February 1929.

of both governments agreed to clear a "frontier zone" from tribesmen two weeks ahead of tax collection.[28] Additionally, it would be up to the tribesmen to select which side to move to while the tax collection simultaneously took place on both sides of the border.[29] More importantly, taxes would be collected by the border control officials of each of the two states and not tribal shaikhs, who would also be obliged to empty the frontier zone and its vicinity around the time of tax collection.[30] The width of the frontier zone would be around 30 kilometers, with 15 kilometers on each side of the border.[31] The officers also agreed for the zone delimitation to be "easily recognizable on the ground" to avoid misunderstandings from both sides.[32] Should the tribesmen not evacuate the frontier zone within the defined time period, they would be fined for an amount equal to the tax which should be paid to the government in control of the territory that they had been forcibly evacuated to. Tax receipts would be issued to tribesmen who had paid taxes to either one of the two governments and prevent them from being double-taxed.[33]

During June 1929, the coordination mechanism for tax collection between Syrian and Iraqi governments was first put into test, and to the dismay of British officers, things did not go according to plan for three reasons: the inaccuracy of British officers' maps of the area, their neglect of tribesmen's needs, and French officers' failure to abide by their commitment to remove Daham from the frontier zone. To begin with, British officers' maps of the borderland region were inaccurate and because of that, they could not properly predict the destination to which the Khurusa tribesmen would temporarily relocate to. The location

[28] TNA, AIR 23/156, Hassache Conference – Process-Verbal of the Meeting Held on 17th Feb 1929, February 17 1929.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.

where the Khurusa tribesmen were grazing during the month of June was on the limit between the frontier zone and Syria rather than closer to the Iraqi side as the British officials had previously thought. Because of that, most of the Khurusa tribesmen found it more sensible to join to the Syrian side and pay taxes to the government there.[34] This was not the first time that British officials were confused about the exact locations and mapping of individuals or geographies. In 1924, both French and British officers claimed that the point of Al Badi was in Syrian and Iraqi territory, respectively. The uncertainty on whether Al Badi lied in Iraqi or Syrian territory pushed officers on both sides of the boundary to delay the question until a commission settled the border disputes once and for all.[35] Additionally, in 1926, British air reconnaissance was unable to accurately estimate the number of tents camped at Al Badi as its military technology was unable to tell apart tents from the dark green patches in the area.[36] In 1928, mapping inaccuracies again proved to be a challenge to British officers as the political secretary to the High Commissioner in Baghdad explained that it would be difficult to take action against Daham as it was unclear whether he was in Syrian or Iraqi territory.[37]

The second reason that contributed to the British officers' disappointment with the outcome of tax coordination in 1929 was due to their recurrent misunderstanding and disregard of tribal structure and needs. When 'Ajil was pressed by the Administrative Inspector of Mosul on his inability to convince the Khurusa tribesmen to move to Iraq, he explained that the nearest water source from that location and their closest relatives were

[34] TNA, AIR 23/157, Memorandum from Administrative Inspector Mosul Liwa to the Adviser, Ministry of Interior Baghdad, June 8 1929.
[35] Samuel Dolbee, "The Locust and the Starling: People, Insects, and Disease in the Late Ottoman Jazira and After, 1860-1940," PhD dissertation (New York University, 2017), 325.
[36] Ibid.
[37] TNA, AIR 23/156, Telegram No. 450 from the Secretariat of the High Commissioner for Iraq to the Prime Minister of Iraq, December 2, 1926.

on the Syrian side so it was more sensible for them to move there rather than move to the Iraqi side.[38] This led to the Administrative Inspector of Mosul to question 'Ajil's authority over the tribe as he harshly criticized him by saying "if this were the case it did not say much for his [influence] over them!"[39] This shows that British officers did not account for the priority that tribesmen placed on access to water sources in their decision to relocate. It also exhibits, yet again, that British officers had unrealistic expectations on Ajil's ability to coerce Shammar tribesmen as the relationship between a tribal Shaikh and his fellow tribesmen within the same tribe was based on negotiation and persuasion rather than oppression.[40]

The third reason behind the British officers' frustration was due to the French officers backtracking on the commitments that they made during the arrangements for the tax cooperation agreement. Even though it was agreed that 'Ajil and Daham will be removed from the vicinity of the "frontier zone" ahead of tax collection, Daham not only kept his camp in the area during the defined period, but – according to the Administrative Inspector of Mosul – was also spreading "propaganda" among the Shammar tribesmen to pay taxes to the Syrian rather than the Iraqi side.[41] French officers' tacit approval of Daham's actions could have been due to two factors. The first immediate factor was that taxes on the Syrian side were higher than on the Iraq side as the former relied on the accurate counting of cattle (*ta'dad al agnam*) rather than the estimates provided by the Shaikhs (*widi*).[42] For the Shammar tribesmen to pay their taxes in Syria, French officers needed Daham's services in lobbying and pressuring the tribesmen to make that happen. The second factor was that

[38] TNA, AIR 23/157, Memorandum No. I.M./36.A from the Special Service Officer, Mosul to Air Staff, Intelligence, Air Headquarters. Hinaidi, July 25 1929.
[39] TNA, Memorandum No. GR/1129 from Administrative Inspector Mosul Liwa to the Adviser, Ministry of Interior Baghdad, June 8 1929.
[40] Salzman, "Tribes and Modern States," 2.
[41] TNA, AIR 23/157, Memorandum from the British Liasion Officer Beyrouth to Aviation Baghdad, June 12 1929.
[42] TNA, AIR 23/157, Memorandum No. I.M./37 from Special Service Officer, Mosul to Air Staff, Intelligence, Air Headquarters, June 4 1929.

French officers possibly wanted to expand the authority of the Syrian state over Shammar tribesmen. This could then be used as an argument in favor of expanding Syrian territory in the eventual negotiations with the Iraqi state over border delineation. British officials' concern regarding tension rising from Daham's presence on the border turned out to be justified as the following month witnessed armed fighting between Daham's men and Syrian Camel Corps on the one hand, and Shammar tribesmen encamped in Iraq.[43] After the partial breakdown in coordination between the Syrian and Iraqi sides on tax collection, the tribesmen moved to Iraq given that taxes there were lower than those in Syria.[44] According to the Administrative Inspector of Mosul, Daham then chased after the tribesmen into Iraq, threatened them with "severe punishment," and seized a hundred camels from the fleeing tribesmen.[45]

In effect, the Iraqi states' direct intervention in tax collection failed to avoid the tensions that it was meant to circumvent, although that was the major drive behind not involving 'Ajil and stepping in without any tribal intermediaries. Because of that, the political secretary of the high commissioner wrote in early August 1929 that:

> "it is unfortunate that, instead of removing difficulties, the plan for widi [tax] cooperation seem to have increased friction and embittered local feelings."[46]

The chaos caused by the lack of coordination between the Iraqi and Syrian sides also embittered the relationship between British and French officials. When French officials described Daham's reported raid on tribesmen who had already paid taxes to the Iraqi government as "peaceful maneouvres," the Administrative Inspector of Mosul labeled the

[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.
[45] TNA, AIR 23/157, Letters from Administer Inspector, Mosul to Délégué at Deir, Dair-ez-Zor, July 1 and 3 1929.
[46] Intelligence Report No. 17, The Residency, Baghdad, August 16, 1929, 73. FO 371/13760.

French officials' allegations as "complete fabrications."[47] He also expressed his convictions that other similar incidents were "inspired by the French" and that "they were fully implicated" in them.[48]

The failed tax cooperation exhibits how the entanglement of the triangle of power relations (state, borderland elites, and people) of the two states' borderland regions frustrated British officers' attempts at exerting control over the Shammar.[49] Both the Iraqi and the Syrian states competed over the leadership of the Shammar tribesmen to bring them under their respective authority. Given that the Syrian state (guided by the French officers) supported the elites of its own borderland (i.e. Daham) to undermine the authority of the Iraqi state, British officers were encouraged to respond in the same manner by enabling 'Ajil and avoiding a direct, hard-handed state intervention that would push the Shammar tribesmen into the hands of Daham. This was the implicit argument in the British SSO's commentary on the failed tax cooperation between the Iraqi and Syrian states. After agreeing with the Administrative Inspector's claim that French officers were fully supportive of Daham's incursions into Iraq, the SSO in Mosul explained that the British officers' approach to tribal elites depended on Iraq's relationship with (French) Syria. If French officers persisted with mobilizing Daham to force Shammar tribesmen to come into Syria and pay taxes there, then British officers should do the same with 'Ajil and instruct him to entice tribesmen on the border between Syria and Iraq to join the latter and resist the former's attempts at taxing them. If, on the contrary, French officials were willing to cooperate on dividing Shammar between Iraq and Syria and encouraging them to settle

[47] TNA, AIR 23/157, Memorandum No. 426 from Administrative Inspector Mosul Liwa to the Adviser, Ministry of Interior, Baghdad, July 22 1929.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Michiel Baud and Willem Van Schendel, "Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands," *Journal of World History* (1997), 227.

down, then the Iraqi government should sideline Ajil and install several military and police posts to reinforce the boundary.[50]

Northern Jazira continued to be an "unruly borderland" after the failed attempts at direct state intervention in tax collection.[51] In the years after 1929, British officials decided to proceed with tax collection without coordinating with the French side as the experience of coordinating in tax collection was deemed unsatisfactory and a failure by the High Commissioner in Baghdad.[52] With the lack of the coordination however, issues that undermined both states' authorities and their common border continued in 1930 and 1931. In both years, British intelligence reported incidents of Shammar tribesmen escaping Syria to Iraq to avoid taxation and of Syrian camel forces chasing them into northern Iraq to collect taxes.[53]

Concluding Remarks

Even though tribal elites benefitted from the role assigned to them as tax collectors, they also stood to lose support among their tribesmen who sought to move to other countries with lower tax costs than the ones they were in. Between October and November 1927, sections of the Shammar in Iraq were reported by the SSO in Mosul to be leaving Iraq to Najd (Saudi Arabia) after complaining of the heavy taxation by 'Ajil.[54] As a response to losing tribesmen to Najd, 'Ajil requested the aid of government officials to prevent his followers from crossing the border into Nejd as he was unable to convince them by relying

[50] TNA, AIR 23/157, Memorandum No. I.M./36.A from the Special Service Officer, Mosul to Air Staff, Intelligence, Air Headquarters. Hinaidi, July 25, 1929.
[51] Baud and Van Schendel, "Comparative History of Borderlands," 228.
[52] TNA, AIR 23/158, Telegram No.50 from High Commissioner, Baghdad to H.B.M's Consul General, Beyrout, March 2 1931.
[53] TNA, AIR 23/158, Weekly Report No, I/M/10 by Special Service Officer Mosul, August 23 1930.
[54] TNA, AIR 23/154, Extract from Special Service Officer Baghdad's Report No.I/Bd/35, October 14 1927. 20220503_130247; TNA, Air 23/155, Extract from Special Service Officer Baghdad's Report No.I/Bd/35, November 9 1927.

on his own means.[55] Daham also faced a similar situation in Syria. In January 1930, there were several rumors received by SSO in Mosul about Daham planning on moving to Iraq and French officers planning on increasing his subsidy to discourage him from doing so.[56] Nevertheless, it seemed that those promises did not achieve their intended purpose as it was reported that two months later Daham was blocked at the border by the Syrian Camel Corps from crossing into Iraq to become permanently based there.[57] In July 1930, Daham was reported to have clearly communicated his position to the Syrian authorities and French officers. He stated that if French officers refused to reduce taxes on Shammar tribesmen, then the Shammar will move to Iraq and he will resign from being their chief in Syria.[58] Syrian authorities took his threat seriously as SSO in Mosul reported that in August 1930, French authorities only took one quarter of the amount that they had collected a year before in taxes from Daham.[59]

The Late Ottoman provincial administrations faced similar challenges to the ones that the Iraqi state faced in its collecting of taxes from the Shammar during the second half of the mandate period. In 1889, the Deir ez-Zur and Aleppo provincial authorities were in dispute over who should be collecting taxes from the 'Anazah tribe.[60] The Deir ez-Zur authorities detained the shaikhs of the 'Anazah in order to pressure them to communicate to the central government that the taxes should be handed in solely to them. When that tactic failed, the Deir ez-Zur authorities sought to sideline the shaikhs altogether in order to have more direct control over tax collection and the negotiation for better terms with the

[55] TNA, AIR 23/155, Extract from Special Service Officer Baghdad's Report No.I/Bd/35, November 5 1927.
[56] TNA, AIR 23/158, Weekly Report by I/M/1 by Special Service Officer Mosul, January 9 1930.
[57] TNA, AIR 23/158, Weekly Report by I/M/8 by Special Service Officer Mosul, April 7 1930.
[58] TNA, AIR 23/158, Weekly Report by I/M/1&2 by Special Service Officer Mosul, July 22 1930.
[59] TNA, AIR 23/158, Weekly Report by I/M/10 by Special Service Officer Mosul, August 23 1930.
[60] M. Talha Çiçek, "Taxation: The collection of Shammar and Anizah Duties," in *Negotiating Empire in the Middle East: Ottomans and Arab Nomads in the Modern Era, 1840–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 227.

central government.[61] The dispute remained unresolved despite the central authorities coming up with an arrangement that was strikingly analogous to the cooperation agreement between Syrian and Iraqi authorities around forty years later. The proposition entailed that the *wadi* taxes of Deir ez-Zur, Aleppo and Mosul would all be collected in one center by the Deir authorities with the support of the mobile mule corps. However, provincial authorities were strongly against the arrangement and put considerable effort for it not to succeed.[62] Eventually, the arrangement was abandoned. Another incident which also resembled the tax collection disputes of 1928 involved Daham's grandfather 'Asi when he was the paramount shaikh of the Shammar in the Mosul province.[63] In 1898, Faris Pasha, sheikh of the Shammar in Deir ez-Zur crossed the provincial boundary into Mosul to collect the *wadi* tax from the Shammar. However, Faris and his accompanied mule corps were faced by 'Asi who prevented them from collecting the tax.[64] Unlike the dispute between French Syria and British Iraq, the central government resolved that incident by giving the green light to the Deir ez-Zur officials to proceed with collecting taxes from the contested groups.[65]

Whereas the different provincial administrations which managed the Shammar under the Ottoman empire were ultimately bound in their submission to the orders of a single imperial capital and state, the Syrian and Iraqi states were run by officers who advanced the territorial interests of two competing empires. This contributed to the unruliness of the northern Jazira as the Syrian state pushed tribal elites within its territory to consolidate power over the tribe and undermine the Iraqi state's authority. Because of that, tribal elites within Iraqi territory became indispensable in its efforts to push back

[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid., 228.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.

against French and Syrian efforts at expanding their sphere of influence. This also signified that the British officers had to restrain the expansion of the state into the northern Jazira and continue to rely on tribal elites such as ‘Ajil to rule over the Shammar.

In addition to the Syrian state and its allied tribal elites’ attempts at winning over the Shammar, British officers’ challenges in collecting taxes in the northern Jazira were due to their own neglect of tribal needs and tribal politics as well. Part of the reason why tax coordination with the Syrian state did not go according to British plans was due to their dismissiveness of the tribesmen’s grazing needs and their access to water. British officers also set themselves up for disappointment because of their wishful hope that ‘Ajil would be able to coerce the Shammar tribesmen to move and behave according to his order. This went against tribesmen’s understanding of leadership as the Bedouin ethos allowed for a tribesman to voluntarily dissociate from a section and disengage with a tribal leader who fails to win them over through compromise and negotiation. British officers’ pressure on ‘Ajil to be stricter in his control over the Shammar was also self-defeating as tribesmen dissociated themselves from ‘Ajil’s section and moved to other countries which in turn eroded his power and claim to leadership.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I explored the state-tribal relations between the Iraqi state under British tutelage and the Shammar Jarba tribe in northern Iraq. More specifically, I focused on the interaction between British officers and the Shammar's elites or shaikhs by primarily examining the former's intelligence and political reports on northern Iraq and their correspondences related to the Shammar tribesmen. The thesis discussed the factors that the British officers took into consideration in their dealings with the Shammar and its elites. It also attempted to analyze the ways in which the elites coped with the transition from the Ottoman empire to the British mandate and whether their roles and authority increased, waned or remained the same compared to the late Ottoman period. I chose to focus on the Shammar Jarba given that its tribesmen were spread across Iraq, Syria and Turkey. I paid particular attention on how the Shammar's elites adapted and reacted to the struggle between Turkey and Iraq over Mosul, and the dispute between Syria and Iraq over their shared borders. To get an in-depth sense of the interaction between tribal elites and British officers, I chose to concentrate on two episodes during the mandate period: the first episode involved the British officers' appointment of the paramount Shaikh of the Shammar and the aftermath of that decision, while the second one revolved around the Iraqi state's attempts at collecting taxes from the Shammar tribesmen.

The events surrounding the change in the paramount shaikhship exhibited that British officers could not sidestep tribal authority without consequences, especially in a context where neighboring states had interests in undermining British and Iraqi rule in the northern borderland. Even though British officers were aware of the preference of the tribe's leading figure with regards to the paramount Shaikhship, they chose to neglect that factor in order to accommodate for King Faisal I's own preferences. They also went against

tribal tradition given that the eventual incumbent had valuable access to intelligence which was useful in their struggle against Turkey. The change in paramount shaikhship led to an internal struggle among the different Shammar groups which French Syria took advantage of in its own attempts to win over the Shammar and undermine British authority. As a result, northern Iraq during the first half of the mandate period witnessed considerable turmoil and uncertainty where tribal elites' cross-border networks and mobility were highly valued and on-demand. During this period, British officers were more focused on protecting the northern frontier from Kemalist Turkey and less interested in controlling and subjugating the Shammar to state authority given that it was precisely an important aspect of their "non-state" activities – mainly their cross-border mobility – which was deemed valuable in their struggle against the Kemalist forces. Additionally, and as has been argued by other scholars who analyzed state-tribal relations from a transnational perspective, the disputes and competition between the newly-formed, neighboring states provided the context through which Bedouin elites were able to appropriate state institutions to their own advantage.[1]

During the second half of the mandate period, the Iraqi state became more assertive in its attempts to control the Shammar tribesmen; even though this eroded the authority of tribal elites, they were still considered indispensable amid the border dispute with Syria. British officers' attempts at expanding state control over the Shammar in the borderland meant that tribal elites were threatened to be deserted by their followers who wanted to avoid taxation. Given the British officers' quest to control cross-border mobility, they sought to cooperate with French officers from the Syrian side and opted to sideline tribal elites

[1] Samuel Dolbee, "The Locust and the Starling: People, Insects, and Disease in the Late Ottoman Jazira and After, 1860-1940," PhD dissertation (New York University, 2017); Laura Stocker, "THE 'CAMEL DISPUTE': CROSS-BORDER MOBILITY AND TRIBAL CONFLICTS IN THE IRAQI–SYRIAN BORDERLAND, 1929–34," in *Regimes of Mobility: Borders and State Formation in the Middle East, 1918-1946*, ed. Jordi Tejel and Ramazan Hakkı Öztan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022), 319-350.

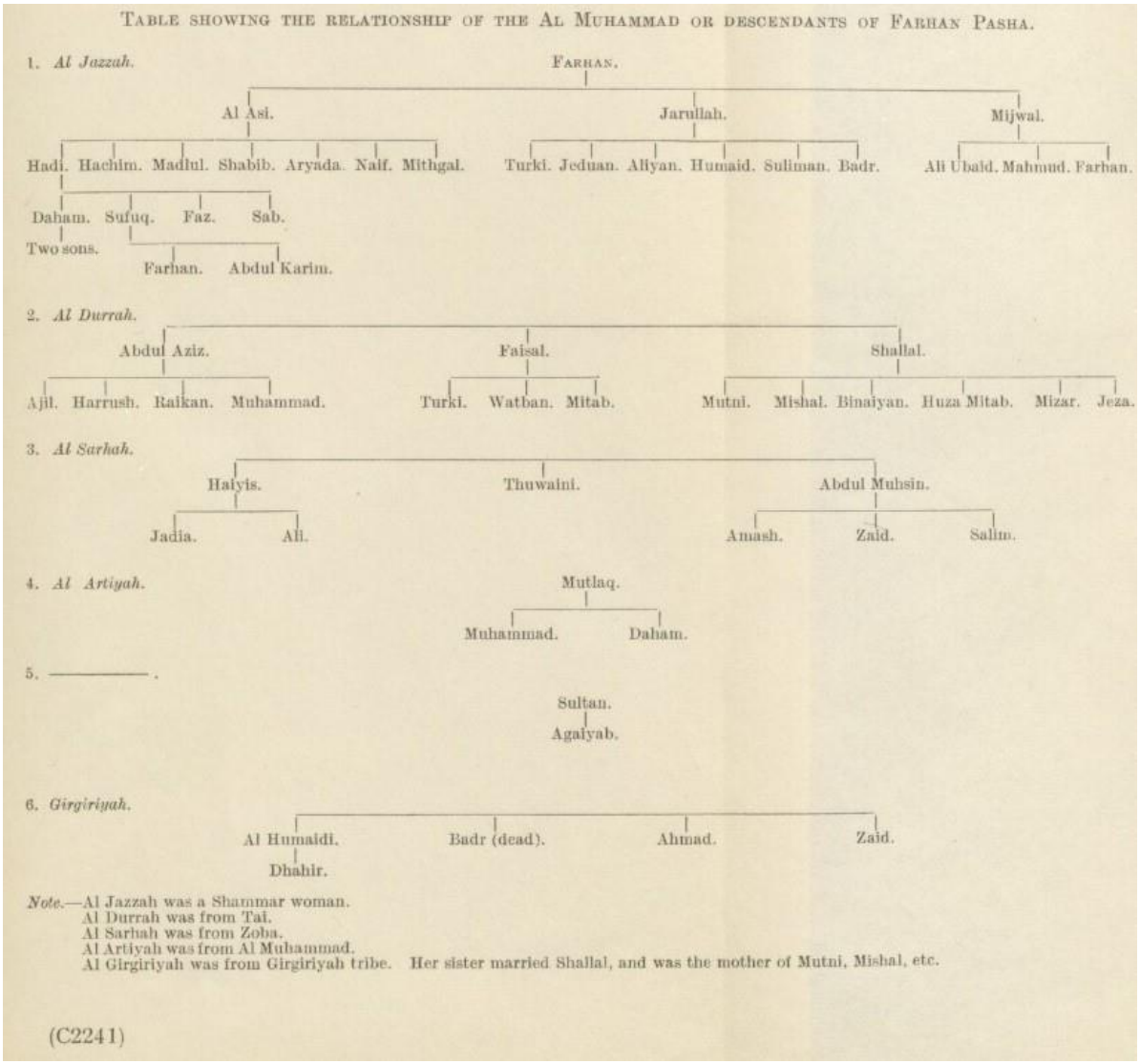
whose presence on the borderland threatened to reignite armed tensions. However, direct state intervention in the borderland by the Iraqi state failed precisely because the French officers on the Syria side of the border were interested in undermining British authority by expanding the influence of their allied Shammar elites among the tribe's members in Iraq. It also failed because of British officers' neglect of tribal needs and the misguided and wishful expectation that a tribal shaikh can steer his followers without persuasion and negotiation. All in all, the experiment of coordinating tax collection with French Syria prior to resolving the border dispute proved to British officers that governing through tribal elites was more sensible and less costly compared to direct state control.

I have argued that the dynamics between the Shammar elites and the British officers show that state-tribal relations in northern Iraq under the British mandate exhibited more continuity than rupture with the late Ottoman period. Tribal shaikhs were already accustomed to compromising and negotiating with state authorities during the late Ottoman period when they faced very similar dynamics in the mandate period. Nonetheless, whereas shaikhs under the Ottoman empire gained influence by associating themselves with provincial authorities subject to one central power, Bedouin elites during the mandate period were employees of nascent nation-states in competition or struggle with one another over border and territorial disputes. This context provided tribal shaikhs with more opportunities compared to the late Ottoman period to obtain more power from the Iraqi (and Syrian) states who vied for power among the Bedouin in their attempts to increase their overall influence and push back against the expansion of neighboring states. Competition over territory in the decade following the fall of the Ottoman empire meant that states were primarily occupied with expanding or consolidating their geographic reach, which allowed

Bedouin elites – who exhibited considerable flexibility in dealing with the nascent states – to maintain the nomadic ways of their fellow tribesmen.

While this thesis argues that tribal elites were able to adapt and possibly benefit from the turmoil during the mandate period, the same could not be said of ordinary tribesmen. The sources used in this thesis do not provide enough insights on the livelihoods and perspectives of common tribesmen. For instance, it is difficult to adequately reflect on the extent to which tribesmen's access to pasture was affected by the border disputes and territorial struggles during the mandate period. It is also difficult to gauge the frequency of double taxation among the ordinary tribesmen. As a result, the overall picture on state-tribal relations is incomplete without accounting for the interaction between ordinary tribesmen and their own elites and the ways in which the common tribesman adapted to the introduction of new borders and the arrival of British and French forces. Complimenting British sources with French and Turkish ones would provide a better sense of such dynamics. This could be the basis for future research on the subject, in addition to extending the studied period to cover the entire phase of monarchic rule in Iraq rather than just focusing on the mandate years. The National Library in Baghdad houses proceedings from tribal settlement councils that operated under the framework of the Tribal Criminal and Civil Dispute Regulation which was valid between 1916 and 1958. The tribal files in Baghdad – which cover the period between 1932 and 1958 – would shed more light on the social and economic challenges of tribesmen in post-imperial Iraq and enrich research on state-tribal relations during the inter-war period.

Appendix



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